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A SEARCH FOR A RELATIONSHIP IN THE WORK OF DEWEY AND RAWLS

By

Joseph C. Ficarrotta  
B.A., Mercer University, 1981

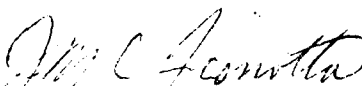
Adviser: Professor James S. Gouinlock

An Abstract of  
A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Emory University in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements of the degree of  
Master of Arts

Department of Philosophy/Graduate School of Arts & Sciences

1988

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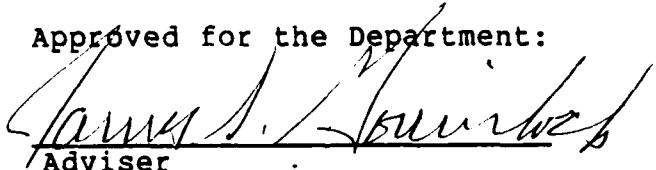
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the intuitive notion that theories of human nature and political thinking in any given philosopher are closely and necessarily related in some way. Given the propensity for system building displayed throughout the history of philosophy, it would not be suprising to find connections, especially in the writings of the most notorious system builders. Yet the massive structures of interconnectedness often rest on strained, awkward, obscure, or ultimately difficult to accept relationships and premisses; in this essay, such grandly inclusive projects are left aside, and more modest goals are set in that a special and sytematic relationship is only being explored between these two areas. *keywords:*

Methodologically, I assert that one good way to search for evidence of such a special relationship is to actually examine the work of a broad sample of philosophers, seeing if the postulated connection obtains, and if it does, what we might say about its nature. Toward this end, the relevant theories of Dewey and Rawls, which present some plainly contrasting methods and conclusions, are examined as test cases. After a largely expository exploration of both philosophers' theories of human nature

*human nature  
political thinking  
social  
philosophy  
Cultures  
(Dewey)  
Rawls  
philosophy  
human nature*

and political organization, the theories are evaluated critically, and examined for correlations and contrasts.

At least in the test cases examined, a relationship of sorts is apparently present between the theories of human nature and theories of politics; success in these two cases leads to a more confident statement of the hypothesis, and points toward further inquiry. In addition to the continuing examination of various particular philosophers, it is suggested that broader conceptual work that would seek formal or logical relations between these types of theories could be appropriately applied to this project.



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## INTRODUCTION

Part of human nature is fixed; part of human nature is changeable. If taken in the most general sense possible, this claim is not really vulnerable to much criticism. It is easy to discern a number of factors in our nature that are fixed, that is, that are not contingent upon environmental influences, political, societal or otherwise. Plainly, the need to consume and subsequently eliminate food and water are fixed. Sex drive is another element of human nature that is, and invariably will be, present to some degree in every normal human constitution. It might be taken as an objection that we share the aforementioned features with most other animals, but this does not alter the fact that they are part of our make-up too, and they must be counted in any reckoning of our nature. In any case, we can certainly agree that there is some list of factors, however meager or lengthy it may ultimately turn out to be, that enumerates what is fixed in human nature, what is constant because it is grounded in contributions by our biology, and what will not change from place to place or time to time (so long as we restrict our temporal outlook to a few millenia into the evolutionary past or future).

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At the other end of the conceptual line that

delineates human nature is the obvious fact of change and mutability. Knowledge of, for instance, particle physics, is not a necessary or universal component of the human mind, yet it can indeed be found on occasion. More to the point, anything that is learned, from language to behavior patterns, is changeable, even if we would want to place the capacity to learn with those components that are fixed. I suppose there have been thinkers who believe it essential in any search for human nature to discount the changeable aspects of the human constitution as just what we do not want to know about--only the fixed and eternal components are what we should be concerned with. Perhaps this orientation is motivated by the fact that when we consider the changeable components of our nature the task of drawing up a palpable conceptual model becomes almost overwhelmingly complicated; regardless, an understandable desire for palpability cannot lead us to exclude what must be included. What account of human nature can exclude factors of language, society, culture and the like and still tell us anything useful? No less important than the capacity to learn, what is learned is part of what we are.

Of course, what is fixed and what is changeable both simultaneously exert their influences over the final product that is our nature, and they are often in at least temporary conflict. Toilet training is a traumatic

synthesis of biological drives and cultural imperatives, yet once the peace is made between these two behavior motivating forces, it becomes a natural and unlabored part of our daily functioning. Sadly, other clashes strain the psyche more persistently and resist the equilibrium that we call normalcy or successful socialization; severe and/or repeated physical or mental abuse, or requirements to adapt to environmental conditions that press our biology to its limit, do not make for a comfortable or well-balanced existence. Still, we can profitably see any adaptive behavior as an attempt to integrate or harmonize our biological or previously learned tendencies and the requirements of a new situation--some adaptations are just easier balances to strike than others.

As an aside, this notion of adaptation, together with the allusion above to the long-term genetic changes of evolution, brings out an interesting point. Genetic change is change all the same, and, although slower, it is no less an adaptation to environment than learning; likewise, learning, as best we are able to determine, involves biological (albeit neuronal rather than genetic) change. The difference that makes a difference in the distinction between fixity and changeability is not a purely biological/cultural-psychological one; that distinction has become less clear in recent years. The usefulness of the

fixed/changeable distinction has to be couched in more formal terms: fixed must loosely translate into what is, relatively speaking, not subject to adaptation, and changeable what we can change or observe change in. As genetic engineers perfect their craft, this point will be more and more relevant.

These obvious parameters of our make up, specifically, the factors that lie somewhere between the conceptual poles of fixity and changeability, and the acknowledgement of some sort of process between the two, are the starting points of any theory of human nature. Yet what belongs at what point along our conceptual line, what forces any one factor will exert, what sort of relationships that can be found between them, and how this all comes together to form our nature are all problematic considerations. Neither is how the model is fleshed out a matter of small importance; what we say to these problems about our nature will lead us, or perhaps even commit us, to certain ideas about how we relate to each other in groups.

More precisely, I am asserting that any project aimed at understanding our relationships to one another as realized in societal and political institutions will be critically influenced by the specific model of human nature subscribed to. In some cases, assertions in the

societal/political area might even be forgone conclusions given a particular conceptualization of human nature. If one believes that man is, above all else, naturally violent and self-centered, then one's explanations of what glues a society together will differ from someone who believes that man, at bottom, is a social, benevolent and altruistic creature. When normative questions about change or reform in a society are raised, the presuppositions about human nature are no less critical. Assuming, as is often the case, that a society should exist for the good of its members, a view that sees a predominately fixed or transcendent human nature might lead us to establish institutions with permanent and immutable characteristics; a predominately dynamic nature would require fluid and changeable institutions that would have the capacity to accomodate the ever changing needs presented. Likewise, if we choose to commit ourselves to a given theory of political organization, it may similarly limit us in the number of models of human nature that we could consistently subscribe to.

Given these observations, it is counterproductive to go too far in separating thinking about human nature and thinking about culture, society or politics, which is, finally, directed at how individual human natures are associated. In fact, any theory that addresses these larger

associations at least implies ideas about the individuals that make them up; likewise, a given theory of human nature will imply, if not a particular political theory, at least a limited range of possible explanations at the larger level. It is best to make the relationship between the two areas of focus explicit in analyzing any philosophical scheme, for doing so will help clarify points of disagreement, and might serve to dissolve apparent incommensurabilities encountered in trying to compare and evaluate competing theories.

One thinker who has been particularly successful in not erecting artificial conceptual barriers between various areas of inquiry is John Dewey; using his ideas as a paradigm case of the coherence and explanatory power that might be had using this approach, we will examine the theories of Dewey concerning human nature and the state. Next, we will turn to John Rawls, a philosopher who, using a contract approach with a Kantian flavor, appears to have drawn markedly different conclusions than Dewey about the foundations of politics. Lastly, an attempt will be made to explore the relationship between the theories of human nature and politics in both Dewey and Rawls, searching for an intimate connection, with hopes that it might support a hypothesis of a general correlation.

It must be noted that no attempt is being made here

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to make final or definitive statements about the positions of Dewey or Rawls. The gist of the thesis is, once again, to do some tentative and rudimentary exploration of the the relationship that might be found between a given general conception of human nature and a given general conception of political theory. In that spirit, the texts used will be limited for purposes of clarity and simplicity, and interpretations will be as uncontroversial as the material permits.

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## CHAPTER 1

### DEWEY'S THEORY OF HUMAN NATURE

The most fundamental feature of Dewey's theory of human nature is at once his conceptual starting point: a man is an organism in an environment, and ". . . all conduct is interaction between elements of human nature and the environment, natural and social."<sup>1</sup> Nothing could be clearer or more obvious for Dewey. From this, we can further see that any living organism is, in virtue of being in an environment, part of that environment. It is constantly interacting with that which surrounds it; indeed, making a distinction between what an organism is and does and the environment it is a part of is something Dewey resists. While it might be helpful at one level, it is plainly injurious at another--making a sharp distinction impedes our understanding of the holistic system that any organism-environment ultimately is. The elements of the system that are man and his environment have been variously named by Dewey, to include impulse, habit, intelligence and culture, but we should not lose sight of the fact, in Dewey's explanation and elaboration of these elements, that what they are and how they are related constitutes a dynamic and interacting whole.

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The confluence of the fixed and variable components noted above, the final product that is human nature, is ultimately for Dewey what he calls habit. Of course, in accord with his holistic starting point, habits are not formed in isolation by an individual, but come to be in a rich and interactive environment.

Habits may be profitably compared to physiological functions, like breathing, digestion. The latter are, to be sure, involuntary, while habits are acquired. But as important as this difference is . . . habits are like [physiological] functions . . . in requiring the cooperation of organism and environment.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, habits can be looked at as something the environment does through the medium of an organism, the habit being wholly a product of the action of the environment on the predispositions of the organism (whether previously acquired habits or natural impulses, to be discussed below).

The same air that under certain conditions ruffles the pool or wrecks buildings, under other conditions purifies the blood and conveys thought.

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The outcome depends upon what the air acts upon. The social environment acts through native impulses and speech and [thereby] moral habitudes manifest themselves.<sup>3</sup>

The strongest aspect of Dewey's idea about habit is that it is, at least at one level, the sole building block of an organism's nature. The bundle of habits that make up our learned patterns of thought and behavior are the only controlling influences to be found, whether exerting their influence in an unfettered way as in the routine we might normally associate with habit, or when two or more habitual modes of thought or behavior clash and require resolution. In short, the 'self' just is a unique collection of habits.

When we are honest with ourselves we acknowledge that a habit has . . . power [over our actions] because it is so intimately a part of ourselves. It has a hold upon us because we are the habit.<sup>4</sup>

If one were to ask where this conception of the self makes room for intelligence, will, and other features of human nature not traditionally associated with habit, Dewey would

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answer that any such notion we like can be connected with having a 'mind' or a 'self' and still be explained in terms of or reduced to the functioning of a habit. What we desire, we desire as a result of the forces of habit; there is no other vague or mysterious force called 'will' in the organism. In fact, habits, "in any intelligible sense of the word . . . are will." Not only do they "rule our thoughts, determining which shall appear and be strong and which shall pass from light into obscurity,"<sup>5</sup> but any thought at all is parasitical in a way on the habit or habits behind it. There is no "immaculate conception of meanings and purposes" and the idea of thought or reason "pure of all influence of prior habit is a fiction." Even a "clear cut sensation" is a matter of the influence of habit, for

. . . observation of a child will . . . reveal that even such gross discriminations as black, white, red, green, are the result of some years of active dealings . . . in the course of which habits are set up.<sup>6</sup>

If habits are to explain so much of our nature, it would be fair to ask how they are formed. If our behavior and thoughts, our willing and desiring, our perception and

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even our very 'self' are a function of habit, what then is habit the result of? To answer this, we must keep clear in our minds what Dewey means by habit; plainly, it is not merely a repetition of behavior, for this kind of regularity is a manifestation of habit, and not what it is in essence.

The word habit may seem twisted somewhat from its customary use when employed as we have been using it. But we need a word to express that kind of human activity which is influenced by prior activity and in that sense acquired; which contains within itself a certain ordering or systematization of minor elements of action; which is projective, dynamic in quality, ready for overt manifestation; and which is operative in some subdued and subordinate form even when not obviously dominating activity . . . . we may also use the words attitude and disposition [if we keep in mind] . . . the sense of operativeness, actuality.<sup>7</sup>

With our focus on this broad and encompassing conception of habit, hopefully we will not oversimplify what it is that contributes to it, or address too narrow a range of activity in locating its sources.

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As we painted above with broad strokes, habit is a result of the interaction between organism and environment. The organism contributes two basic elements: previously formed habit and the force of natural impulse. The environment contributes the habits of other human beings and the physical factors associated with heat, light, water, the capacity to grow food, and anything else relevant to human well-being and flourishing. Let us examine each of these elements of habit formation, beginning with the organism's natural impulse.

Dewey does admit the role of natural impulse as one that is part of our biological constitutions, but he takes great pains to distinguish his position on what the impulse as such is and the role it plays in determining our nature from the commonly accepted role of instinct in behavior. He believes the words instinct and impulse to be for the most part synonymous, but he prefers to use impulse, feeling it carries less association with the ideas he is criticizing.<sup>8</sup> Specifically, he feels that instincts in humans do not consist of an inborn ability or inclination to a fully-formed, meaningful or specific behavior.<sup>9</sup> In lower animals, instincts can, and normally are, associated with a particular and developed type of behavior. In human beings, the natural impulse is a primitive component, demanding no particular or developed behavior in response to it; the

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confluence of previous habits and the social and natural environment will see to a complete realization of the conduct that the impulse catalyzes. What kind of activity natural impulses result in for humans is almost infinitely variable, constrained at only a few limits, the crossing of which would result in extreme biological distress or death. The huge variety of possible manifestations within those meager constraints is determined by the stimulus and interaction of the above mentioned forces of previous habit and social and natural environment with the blind, dumb force of the impulse. The impulse is the engine, providing the energy and impetus to do something; the result, the what is actually done, is the actual behavior, the formed habit, whether old or new, the overt human nature.

Dewey's natural impulse, it should be noted, is the only component of human nature that enjoys fixity. Given the role here outlined, restricting it to a blind and formless catalytic force with little relation to the final form of ensuing behavior, plainly Dewey sees human nature as substantially changeable. There is no aspect of human nature, this collection of habitual ways of acting, thinking and responding, that is immune from mutation. Change in the environment, social or natural, or dynamic processes in the group of habits already engraved on an individual, or some combination of both, would, stoked by

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the fires of impulse, result in a change in human nature. There is no transcendent or eternal component, and Dewey is perhaps as close to the conceptual pole of changeability we discussed at the outset of this essay as one could possibly be placed.

Having some idea of what Dewey means by natural impulse, we can turn to some of the other factors that result in the formation of habit, the least difficult being the natural environment. This is the physical, decidedly not-social world that affects human well-being, and consequently, has the potential of influencing formation of, or changes in, habits. Interestingly enough, even these things that at first glance seem distinct from the social milieu, such as the climate, the lay of the land, the presence of disease or the availability of easily gathered foodstuff all exert varying degrees of influence on habit formation in a given culture as a function of already entrenched widespread habitual behavior in that given culture. For instance, the onset of a rainy season has no appreciable effect on the community life (or what passes for community life) in a Western metropolitan area, but would be of supreme significance to a group not in the habit of living, working and playing in buildings. So even these brute 'facts' of nature, as we saw to be true of the brute impulses from within, are filtered through

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collections of habit to derive their meaning insofar as they will have an effect on human nature and the habits that make it up.<sup>10</sup>

The social environment is nothing more than the habits that the individual members of that society share. What gives rise to this commonality no doubt has something to do with the similiarity in impulse and natural environment found in a given culture, but Dewey is certain that this is not the major factor.

To a considerable extent customs, or widespread uniformities of habit, exist because individuals face the same situation and react in like fashion. But to a larger extent customs persist because individuals form their personal habits under conditions set by prior customs.<sup>11</sup>

In other words, the commonality of habits, or customs, that make up a culture are passed from one generation to the next (or possibly from one group to the next) one person at a time in the form of habit formation or modification. In children this is possible because of their plasticity of habit while growing;<sup>12</sup> in adults it could be a result of what Dewey loosely refers to as the "instinct to conformity."<sup>13</sup> This is what the social environment is, and

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how it effects human nature.

To talk about the priority of 'society' to the individual is to indulge in nonsensical metaphysics. But to say that some pre-existent association of human beings is prior to every particular human being is to mention a commonplace. These associations are definite modes of interaction of persons with one another; that is to say they form customs, institutions.<sup>14</sup>

This all said, we can see that the effects of natural impulse and the natural environment, although filtered through habits, and the previously existing habits found in the individual and the social setting, all come together to form a holistic, interactive system. These factors meet at a point where, in most cases, an opposition of habit against habit is the penultimate state of affairs to the generation of a new habit, or the modification of an old one. All that remains is to outline how habits interact with one another, the behavior of habit once it is formed, and the office and nature of intelligence in all of this for the human being.

Habits are, as Dewey has explained them, a tendency to act, and they exert great power. Once the engraving is

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done, they can become routines that direct action in a way that makes thought "no longer needed or possible."<sup>15</sup> It is a "mechanism of action, physiologically engrained, which operates . . . automatically."<sup>16</sup> They are, for the most part, resistant to change, and Dewey points out clearly that "habits . . . are not so easily modified."<sup>17</sup> This results in a situation where habits long outlive the objective conditions that gave rise to their formation to begin with; Dewey observes that the "force of lag in human life is enormous."<sup>18</sup>

What happens when habits conflict? Inevitably, especially when the body of 'outmoded' habits pointed to above are taken into consideration, the actions or thoughts resulting from two or more habits will clash. It is here, in the resolving of these frequent, though not always momentous conflicts of habit, that we find the most critical and exciting component of human nature, reflection and intelligence. The conflict of habits, whether precipitated by a change in impulse or in the environment, demands a choice in the juxtapositioning; one, the other, a synthesis or a completely new habit must be chosen. It is this resolution that is "the essential function of intelligence."<sup>19</sup> In the choosing, the process begins with

. . . a dramatic rehearsal (in imagination) of

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various competing possible lines of action. . . .  
Then each habit . . . involved in the temporary  
suspense of overt action [is] . . . tried out.  
Deliberation is an experiment in finding out what  
the various lines of possible action are really  
like. . . .<sup>20</sup>

It is interesting to note that there is nothing mysterious  
or separate about this rehearsal or deliberation. It  
follows naturally from the conflicting habits:

Although overt [emphasis mine] exhibition is checked  
by the pressure of contrary propulsive tendencies,  
this very inhibition gives habit a chance at  
manifestation in thought. . . . Activity does not  
cease in order to give way to reflection; activity  
is turned from execution into intra-organic  
channels, resulting in a dramatic rehearsal. . . .

. . . In thought as well as in overt action,  
the objects experienced in following out a course  
of action attract, repel, satisfy, annoy, promote  
and retard. . . . What is choice then? Simply  
hitting in imagination upon an object which  
furnishes an adequate stimulus to the recovery of  
overt action.<sup>21</sup>

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It can be seen from this description of deliberation and decision that thought itself is something of a habit, a "dramatic rehearsal" of the various possible courses of action that could be realized. For Dewey, the process of thought is not properly a suspension of action, but a relocation of the action to the processes of the brain. For

. . . thinking itself cannot escape the influence of habit, anymore than anything else human. If it is not a part of ordinary habits, then it is a separate habit, habit alongside other habits, apart from them, . . . The so-called separation of theory and practice means in fact the separation of two kinds of practice.<sup>22</sup>

This identification of intelligence with habit, as a type of habit, completes the project of giving a holistic account of human nature. Let us note some of the more important features of it in summary. First, the changeable nature of our formed habits of thought and action almost completely does away with any transcendent or constant features; only change itself remains present, restrained only by the limits of biological distress and death. What is done by a man, what is thought by a man, what is good

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for a man, is a culture specific affair. Second, man has the capacity, through the habit of intelligence, to reflect on his other habits and effect changes in the social and natural environment. Given the pervasive flux in all these factors, the capacity of intelligence is critical for man's continued existence, and beyond that, his formulation and pursuit of specific goods and activities. Lastly, habits of effective intelligence can be taught and improved. Man can learn to learn, and this is a great boon; for the resulting intelligence, while facing formidable opposition in the way of a changing world and the tenacity of outmoded habits, is our best and only tool for human survival and flourishing.

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## CHAPTER 2

### DEWEY ON THE STATE

Does Dewey's conception of human nature imply a particular theory of the state? Given the holistic tenor of his methods, it would be extremely suprising to find any blatant inconsistencies between them. Still, before making any hypothetical predictions about his political ideas, we should examine a summary of them as they actually stand, remembering that we chose Dewey for the very same holistic and consistent approach cited, hoping it would provide us with a paradigm for study of the relationship between these two levels of thought, the individual and the political.

To begin, as in all other areas of his thought, Dewey wishes to demystify notions of political association and the origins of the state. This he is sure we can do if we would only give up

. . . the effort to discover alleged, special, original, society-making causal forces, whether instincts, fiats of will, personal, or an immanent, universal, practical reason, or an indwelling, metaphysical, social essence and nature.<sup>1</sup>

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If we would simply observe what actually obtains in our social and political lives, we would do much better in attempts to explain the workings and origins of the forms in question.

First, it is a plainly observable fact that all things behave in conjunction with other things, in a constant state of effecting and being affected; this is merely an analytic unpacking of Dewey's holistic and systematic world view. Human interactions are somewhat unique in that humans are able to take note of the consequences or results of their associations and assess them in terms of their own interests. Some associations result in consequences that "are confined to those who directly share in the transaction that produces them." Still other associations produce consequences that extend beyond the participants, and insofar as those individuals indirectly effected are aware of the nature and source of these consequences, they have an interest in them and the association that produced them. Dewey calls this group that is "indirectly . . . affected for good or for evil" the public.<sup>2</sup>

This public, which is born out of interactions between individual human beings producing consequences, and a group beyond the direct participants being affected by these consequences, is what gives rise to the state. Dewey

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sums up

. . . that the perceptions of consequences which are projected in important ways beyond the persons and associations directly concerned in them is the source of a public; and that its organization into a state is effected by establishing special agencies to care for and regulate these consequences.<sup>3</sup>

He points to a number of factors in past and still existing political associations that support his idea of consequences and regulation as the basis for the state. First, the temporal and geographic localization of a group, in that it limits the spread of consequences, serves to delimit the extent of a state. In times past, a mountain range or a river was often sufficient to halt the spread of consequences, and in that capacity, also served to delimit a border. Another condition that seems to support his idea is the fact that whenever formerly private matters become extensive in their scope and influence, they invariably become involved and associated with the affairs of state; and conversely, when affairs previously tied up with the state come to have less and less widespread consequences, for whatever reason, they tend to become private matters

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once again. He cited the rise of the King's Peace in England as an example of the former, and the separation of church and state as an instance of the latter. Thirdly, states are concerned with established and well-engrained modes of behavior. Since innovation or invention is by necessity an individual (or small group) undertaking, it should be no surprise that publics organized into states have no dealings with the new and innovative, until such time that it becomes widespread in its practice or consequences.<sup>4</sup>

Dewey's assertion that this model is correct is further supported by what he sees as the miserable failure of previous models that rely on fixity and transcendence to explain variations in political forms.

The very fact that the public depends upon consequences of acts and the perception of consequences, while its organization into a state depends upon the ability to invent and employ special instrumentalities, shows how and why publics and political institutions differ widely from epoch to epoch and place to place. To suppose an a priori. . . nature . . . of the individual on one side and the state on the other . . . fixed once for all apart from all conditions of

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association, . . . [implies] a final and wholesale partitioning . . . of personal and state activity . . . [as] the logical conclusion. The failure of such a theory . . . is . . . a further confirmation of the theory which emphasizes the consequences of activity as the essential affair.<sup>5</sup>

If the state then is this organized public, chartered to regulate and care for the consequences of association, it should be a fairly easy step to find what sort of state would be most effective in fulfilling this function. Plainly, it will be a flexible institution; further, and bubbling below the surface, is the normative assumption that it should exist for the welfare and flourishing of its members as they define it. These criteria are practically included in Dewey's definition of what a state is.

A measure of the goodness of a state is the degree in which it relieves individuals from the waste of negative struggle and needless conflict and confers upon him a positive assurance . . . in what he undertakes.<sup>6</sup>

Naturally, various states will approach the ideal of fulfilling these criteria to greater and lesser degrees. We

can wonder if a particularly bad state, wherein the public is a consummate victim of an oligarchy or dictatorship, would be considered a state at all by Dewey; he might simply view a situation such as this as a raw exercise of power by a few, which calls for the rise of a public and a state to regulate the undesirable consequences that have ensued.

Short of these bare formal criteria, which allow for flexible response to widespread consequences by a public according to their desires, no other specific recommendations on particular functions or institutions are called for by Dewey. As consequences and desires vary, so will the appropriate activity of the state; concrete actions and recommendations will be a function of these appropriate activities. There can be, in Dewey's scheme, no "antecedent universal proposition" concerning the proper limit or extent of state functions. The dynamic nature of the component factors requires that the specific functions "be critically and experimentally determined."<sup>7</sup>

Of the political forms available to us, it appears that democracy holds the greatest promise of actually manifesting the flexibility, responsiveness and awareness called for by Dewey. But the enormous and complex arrangements of our contemporary period fail in many important ways to fulfill the promise. First, the awareness

and understanding of the consequences of action has been obscured, for

. . . the machine age has so enormously expanded, multiplied, intensified and complicated the scope of indirect consequences, have formed such immense and consolidated unions in action, on an impersonal rather than a community basis, that the resultant public cannot identify and distinguish itself.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, the number and size of the publics formed in such complex interrelations have proliferated beyond the point where our "existing resources" can continue to cope with them intelligently.<sup>9</sup> He cites the "World War" as evidence that "existing political and legal forms and arrangements are incompetent to deal with the situation."<sup>10</sup>

What can or should be done? How can the problems of an "inchoate" public, unaware of or unable to grasp the significance of consequences, or an impotent state, unable to regulate the consequences in question for lack of a clearly defined group to act for, be addressed? In short, the

. . . cure for the ailments of democracy is more democracy. The prime difficulty, as we have seen,

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is that of discovering the means by which a scattered, mobile and manifold public may so recognize itself as to define and express its interests.<sup>11</sup>

Once the public has defined itself in a manageable way, the process of deciding what is to be done must be undertaken more effectively.

The essential need, in other words, is the improvement of the methods and the conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion. That is the problem of the public.<sup>12</sup>

Dewey calls for two major reforms to present democratic arrangements to help bring about these changes. The first thing required is a great improvement in the system that provides education and information to citizenry.<sup>13</sup> Nothing else will provide the flexible intelligence needed to effectively care for and manage consequences. Secondly, he urges a return to smaller, face to face, democratic communities; for only in these local arrangements can a public clearly define itself and effectively debate and decide courses of action.<sup>14</sup> He concedes that these smaller associations would necessarily

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be part of larger associative networks, a Great Community of smaller groups, but he insists that the functioning of the state will fall short of its purposes unless it occurs primarily at these lower levels.

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## CHAPTER 3

### RAWLS' THEORY OF HUMAN NATURE

The focus of Rawls' A Theory of Justice is primarily a conception of social justice, which he sees as being concerned with "the basic structure of society, or more exactly, the way in which the major social institutions distribute . . . rights and duties and determine . . . advantages."<sup>1</sup> Of course, in constructing his theory, Rawls makes a number of assumptions about human nature, some explicit and some implied. In fact, in one passage near the opening of the work, he appears to gesture toward the intimate dependency of his theory (or any other theory of society or politics) on the assumptions made about human nature:

. . . various conceptions of justice are the outgrowth of different notions of society against the background of opposing views of the natural necessities and opportunities of human life.<sup>2</sup>

Just what are Rawls' views then? And how do they inform his theory? In the broadest strokes, Rawls' approach is plainly Kantian. Even though making complete sense of

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his ideas on our nature will be challenging without reference to some of the particulars of his theory of justice, in this chapter I shall endeavor to do just that. Outlining his assumptions on human nature in bare form, divorced from his other ideas, will make more explicit the relation between them and further the project of this thesis (gestured to so vaguely by Rawls above in his contention that one view is an outgrowth of another). We will introduce only as much of his theory as is absolutely necessary for the purpose of examining his ideas on human nature.

Rawls constructs a hypothetical contract in outlining his theory that he calls the original position.<sup>3</sup> In it, the contracting parties, in selecting the principles of justice that will bind them "once and for all" in the conduct of social and political affairs, are placed behind a veil of ignorance. This veil of ignorance, while it does allow the contracting parties a good deal of general knowledge, is not supposed to allow them any knowledge about the particular circumstances of their position, status or fortune in the actual world.<sup>4</sup> This scenario, Rawls believes, will allow them to be perfectly fair in their assessment of the various alternative principles and courses of action available, protecting the deliberations from the poison of vested interest. Paradoxically, as we

shall see, the parties to the original position are completely self-interested; even so, this self-interest, in conjunction with the ignorance Rawls imposes on them, will result in what is functionally a complete and impartial fairness of deliberation. What these parties, so constrained, would agree to, is what Rawls believes will give shape to our considered judgements concerning the normative problems of our actual political and social milieu. The system constructed in the original position will give us an ideal to measure and modify the considered judgements we make about the real world.<sup>5</sup>

Rawls follows Kant in assuming that human nature exists, or is perhaps manifested, at two levels: in the noumenal and the phenomenal realms.<sup>6</sup> The noumenal self, or the true self, is the one free from all the contingencies of natural endowment and social accident. It is the self that expresses what makes us essentially human, and contains the determining factors of our true nature. By this he means that there is some characteristic, or set of characteristics, that taken in isolation, actually serves to determine what is uniquely and essentially human. The self, so defined or outlined by these characteristics, is the core of what we are. Rawls, in constructing his hypothetical contract scenario, hopes that he will display this noumenal self, and will allow us to know what it is we

really ought to do and what it is that really constitutes our true nature.

Leaving the original position aside for the moment, I will try to enumerate the assumptions made about the people in it, for Rawls suggests that this is "the point of view from which noumenal selves see the world."<sup>7</sup> The parties to this hypothetical contract are apparently expressions of our true and noumenal selves. This conclusion is by no means entirely unproblematic, for Rawls seems to vacillate, often looking at his contract model as merely a heuristic device to be used in ordering our moral intuitions or considered judgements, and at other times, treating the device as if it provided more, as if it were a window to our noumenal selves in the Kantian sense. In trying to extract his views on human nature, I will assume the latter, relying primarily on the passage just cited and those similar in tone to it (which identified the point of view of the parties to the original position with that of a noumenal self). Statements that Rawls makes about parties to his hypothetical contract will be interpreted hereafter as statements about our noumenal selves. Even if this is not entirely correct (which has been hinted at in later publications by Rawls)<sup>8</sup>, for the purposes of this thesis, it will not be of consequence; this view is at least a plausible interpretation of the text, and even in the

weaker interpretation (where the original position is a merely heuristic device that orders our intuitions, and not some window to a true self), we still have a conception of human nature that posits some elements that are independent of social and natural variations, and that are the seat of our normative ideals.

Still in very close agreement with Kant, Rawls puts forth perhaps the most important characteristics of the noumenal self: we are rational beings, and enjoy as part of our nature freedom and equality. He makes his affinity with Kant clear while working out the Kantian interpretation of his theory:

Kant held, I believe, that a person is acting autonomously when the principles of his action are chosen by him as the most adequate possible expression of his nature as a free and equal rational being.<sup>9</sup>

Further, a free and equal rational being should act at all times to express this true nature, free from the influences of "social or natural contingencies," for "to express one's nature as a particular kind of being is to act on principles that would be chosen if this nature were the decisive determining element."<sup>10</sup> Apparently, freedom,

equality, and rationality just are the determining elements of noumenal human nature, for acting in ways that take them into strict account "is to give expression to one's nature."

Of course, given this, we must assume that human beings want to express their true and noumenal selves. This Rawls concedes and makes explicit, and he posits that we are motivated by shame and the desire to maintain our self-respect. We act

. . . from the desire to express most fully what we are or can be, namely free and equal rational beings with a liberty to choose. . . . [When we fail in this we] have acted as though we belonged to a lower order, as though we were a creature whose first principles are decided by natural contingencies.<sup>11</sup>

The loss of self-respect and the shame engendered are profound indeed in this scheme, for they are in response to a failure at the very roots of our nature, a failure of our true selves. Plainly, the true and noumenal self is not only free, equal and rational, but provides powerful motivation for us to act in ways that express these deep qualities.

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Pressing this model somewhat further, it is natural to ask if the true self qua true self is likewise affected by these motivations, or whether the only manifestation of the self that is so moved is the acting, phenomenal self that must grapple with the contingencies mentioned above. What is it precisely that motivates the noumenal self to act? Or does it act at all? If the true self is to be beyond the contingencies of natural and social accident in making its assessments of life, then in what environment shall it operate? Is it, properly speaking, in an environment at all? References to pure freedom, pure equality and pure reason will not do, for freedom without some finite set of particular choices is meaningless; equality where all are equal in having nothing at all is trivial; and rationality (as Rawls conceives it in this context) without ends is without content. Perhaps pressing this too hard is misguided, in that noumenal and phenomenal selves are never found as separate entities, anymore than form and matter can be separated in any way other than conceptually. Yet if we insist on making a distinction, conceptual or otherwise, it is fair to ask what each self contributes, and which self has primacy. In Rawls, if the parties to the original position have some specific characteristics, motivations and feelings, then we may assume that he would make these same assertions about the

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true, noumenal component of our nature.

What specific characteristics attach, then, to the noumenal self qua noumenal self? The details of how Rawls would answer this question are, of course, wrapped up in the description of the parties to the original position; the constraints and assumptions he introduces into this hypothetical model of the self will tell us much about the noumenal part of his conception of human nature. We have already seen that one thing connected with the noumenal self is the need for self-respect, even if we have not determined the connection precisely. As it turns out, self-respect is part of a list of what Rawls calls primary goods, a set of "things which it is supposed a rational man wants whatever else he wants."<sup>12</sup> These goods fall essentially into the following categories: rights and liberties, opportunities and powers, income and wealth, and a sense of one's worth. We should recall here that in the original position, the contracting parties take the view from which a noumenal self would see the world. This being the case, it is significant that these parties "prefer more rather than less primary goods."<sup>13</sup> It follows that desires for these goods flow from our true selves, and come from deep within our nature; they would presumably also be independent from the contingencies of natural and social accident. Or is this the case? There may be an ambiguity at

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work here masking another alternative.

Rawls also postulates that the parties to this hypothetical contract, while they do not know their particular conception of the good or actual situation as a phenomenal self, are still possessed of broad, general knowledge of human nature and moral psychology. This rather complete knowledge of clearly phenomenal human nature will be summarized shortly; at this point the germane consideration is the fact that the noumenal self has knowledge of it and acts with it in view. In formulating the principles of justice, the resources, limitations, needs, and desires of the phenomenal self must be considered. Perhaps the primary goods, strong textual evidence notwithstanding, are also desired exclusively by the phenomenal self, and the noumenal self has an interest in them only insofar as it takes a knowledge of the phenomenal self into account. In that case, these desires for primary goods, and the aversion to shame as a result of failing to express one's true nature, would not belong to the noumenal self proper, but to the phenomenal self. In fact, on that interpretation, the only characteristic desire or intent one could attribute to the noumenal self is an interest in the concerns of its own phenomenal manifestation; only the phenomenal self would actually want primary goods, self-respect, or to express itself as a free

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and equal rational being. While the already cited passages seem to make this a difficult position to hold (it being more probable that the noumenal self has at least some other desires), it is at least a possibility. This ambiguity would presumably be a problem in any dichotomous, noumenal/phenomenal concept of human nature, including Kant's.

However unlikely it might be that we will be able to divest the noumenal or true self from a desire for the primary goods, there are a number of other characteristics of this deep and determining self that are even more explicitly attributed to it by Rawls, and must be taken at face value. As specific characteristics of the parties to the original position, they must also be identified with Rawls' conception of the view taken by the noumenal self. Among these specific characteristics or attributes are mutual disinterest in general, a concern for the coming generation as an exception to that disinterest, an absence of rancor or envy, an absolute aversion to risk taking in any decision making processes concerning the lot of the phenomenal self, and a rather extensive (but, as I will argue later, carefully screened) body of knowledge about the phenomenal self in general, taking the form of knowledge about general phenomenal human nature and moral psychology.

Mutual disinterest might at first glance seem a rather easy to fathom assertion, but at least two qualifications should be made. First, we must not confuse the idea with egoism. Even though the parties are disinterested, this

. . . does not mean that the parties are egoists, that is, individuals with only certain kinds of interests, say wealth, prestige, and domination. But they are conceived as not taking an interest in one another's interests.<sup>14</sup>

The noumenal self may or may not be concerned only with itself, but whether another noumenal self is or is not an egoist is not a concern of his. This leads us to the second point--mutual disinterest does not rule out the possibility of benevolence. While benevolent considerations might be a part of any one person's virtue or conception of the good, it is plainly not part of the deep, noumenal, and determining part of our nature for Rawls. The reason "why one should not postulate benevolence . . . is that there is no need for so strong a condition."<sup>15</sup> The equality and rationality of the noumenal self, with the concomitant mutual respect these entail, will be quite enough to explain our true nature (and further, to ensure that no one

can play favorites); benevolence, though quite possible and often observed in phenomenal selves (see below), is not a necessary component of deep human nature or right conduct.

This approach seems to leave the noumenal self devoid of any substantial obligations to others, particularly third parties not participating in Rawls' contract as represented by the coming generations. In a discussion of this problem, Rawls introduces another characteristic into the make-up of the contracting parties, and as I have asserted, the nature of the true self:

The parties are thought of as representing continuing lines of claims, as being, so to speak, deputies for a kind of everlasting moral agent or institution. They need not take into account its entire life span in perpetuity, but their goodwill stretches over at least two generations. . . . we may think of the parties as heads of families, and therefore as having a desire to further the welfare of their nearest descendants.<sup>16</sup>

Mutual disinterest does not, apparently, extend to one's children, even at the deep level. Importantly, this notion is different from an idea one might attribute to Rawls that would have persons from every generation being equal

parties to the hypothetical contract, since the veil of ignorance hides from us knowledge about which generation we belong to.<sup>17</sup> It is crucial to note that Rawls takes pains to assert that those in the original position do know that they are contemporaries;<sup>18</sup> moreover, it is clearly not the case that members of each generation are present in the original position representing their interests directly.<sup>19</sup> There is a difference between an ignorance of which generation that we as contemporary contracting parties belong to, and a group of contracting parties that includes at once representation from every generation. Why Rawls disallows the participation of all generations simultaneously is not made explicit by him. Even though the veil of ignorance creates a sort of functional impartiality, it does not entirely solve the problem of justice between generations. The introduction of this paternalistic benevolence is seen by Rawls as necessary to accommodate our intuitions concerning what we owe coming generations; the gist of this modification to the motivations of the parties to the original position is not so much an equal respect for coming and previous generations as it is a sort of benevolent concern for one's immediate descendants (two generations?). We are not to see our immediate descendants as other parties to the contract, but as part of our interests, as we represent a continuing

line.<sup>20</sup> It is not clear whether the fact that everyone in the next generation has at least one "someone who cares about him"<sup>21</sup> amounts to full-fledged benevolence or not. Regardless, some sort of concern for one's off-spring is plainly posited here.

Another characteristic of the noumenal self closely related to benevolence, but which Rawls seems to distinguish from it, is an absence of envy.

The special assumption I make is that a rational individual does not suffer from envy. He is not ready to accept a loss for himself if only others have less as well. He is not downcast by the knowledge or perception that others have a larger index of primary social goods.<sup>22</sup>

He mentions this again while summarizing the qualities he attributes to the noumenal self:

. . . mutually disinterested rationality, then, comes to this: . . . attempting to win . . . the highest index of primary social goods. . . . The parties do not seek to confer benefits or to impose injuries on one another; they are not moved by affection or rancor. Nor do they try to gain

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relative to each other; they are not envious or vain.<sup>23</sup>

The mutual disinterestedness is apparently complete, arousing no emotional responses concerning others, whether it be positive or negative.

While others are not the focus of any emotional responses, when the self is considered, and decisions are made that take the lot of the phenomenal self into account, I assert that something akin to fear permeates every thought. What prompts me to make such an assertion is the aversion on the part of the noumenal self to take any risks whatever when the lot of the phenomenal self is at stake. That choice under uncertainty must be considered, Rawls himself points out:

. . . that probability should arise . . . in moral philosophy . . . is . . . the inevitable consequence of the contract doctrine that conceives of moral philosophy as part of the theory of rational choice. Considerations of probability are bound to enter in given the way in which the [original position] . . . is defined. . . . The [design of the contract] . . . leads directly to the problem of choice under uncertainty.<sup>24</sup>

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Since the reasons for this inevitable consideration under uncertainty are rooted in the design of the hypothetical contract (for purposes of ensuring functional impartiality), the nature of the problem is, in a sense, an artificial one. It will be enough here to say that it is indeed a problem; his solution is what bears relevance to the noumenal self.

What he hopes to show is that an extremely conservative stance toward risk taking is what the parties in the original position would adopt. Rawls justifies this in terms of our postulated noumenal rationality, stating that taking risks would be irrational; for if the parties can arrange "principles . . . which secure a satisfactory minimum, it seems unwise, if not irrational, for them to take a chance that these outcomes are not realized."<sup>25</sup> Moreover, after some rather involved arguments (which I will not reproduce here), Rawls appears confident he has "shown . . . that choosing as if one had such an aversion [to risk taking] is rational" in the original position.<sup>26</sup> Whether his account is convincing or not, even where risks are small and rewards great, is a matter upon which we will suspend judgement. Regardless, it is plainly a characteristic he would assign to the noumenal self.

Lastly, Rawls postulates the parties to his

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hypothetical contract as having a rather extensive knowledge of phenomenal human nature in general and the principles of moral psychology.

It is taken for granted . . . that they [the parties to the original position] know the general facts about human society. They understand political affairs and the principles of economic theory; they know the basis of social organization and the laws of human psychology. Indeed, the parties are presumed to know whatever general [my emphasis] facts [that] affect the choice of principles. . . . There are no limitations on general information, that is, on general laws and theories.<sup>27</sup>

This knowledge allows our true and noumenal selves to be rational and select principles in ways that will in fact be accepted in the phenomenal realm; Rawls, seeming to part company with the deontological tradition on this point, assumes that the principles of justice selected by the parties to the original position must be principles that are workable in the real world (even if they are not received with unbridled enthusiasm). It is necessary to possess this knowledge lest our true selves blunder, for

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example, into embracing a principle "that, in view of the laws of moral psychology, men would not acquire a desire to act upon."<sup>28</sup> The men he speaks of here are presumably phenomenal men, men who are subject to social accident and variations of natural endowment, among other things.

It is interesting to note that this requirement makes the effectiveness of the contracting parties in selecting the appropriate principles dependent on complete and accurate knowledge of the principles of phenomenal human psychology.

. . . [I]n working out what the requisite principles are, we must rely upon current knowledge as recognized by common sense and the existing scientific consensus. . . . We have to concede that as established beliefs change, it is possible that the principles of justice . . . may likewise change.<sup>29</sup>

Rawls' concession on this important point seems to open the door to a change and evolution of ideas in a way that is not entirely consistent with his apparent agenda of looking for stable and unchanging principles.

Exactly where Rawls would have us draw the line between the noumenal and phenomenal self, and which

characteristics will invariably assign to which realm, is, as we have noted, a difficult matter to ascertain with precision. A complete and definitive discussion would be well beyond the scope and focus of this thesis. Still, there are some features of self that seem plainly to belong to the phenomenal manifestation, and we shall first examine these unproblematic features.

Generally speaking, it appears that in contrast to the noumenal self, which is immune from the happenstance of natural endowment and social accident, the phenomenal self's nature is actually conditioned by those very environmental variations. Qualities of exceptional goodness or badness in individual persons are phenomenal, the essential criteria being that the qualities in question be contingent matters, dependent on variable factors such as family life, social class, natural endowment, and for Rawls, the resultant character traits that these variable factors give rise to. All the contingent factors, whether they are widely held to be flattering or unflattering components of our nature, fall squarely into the phenomenal corner. Further, these phenomenal and contingent traits of human nature obey certain discoverable psychological laws or principles, and Rawls posits some rather specific ideas on this.

In the phenomenal realm, the "plurality and

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distinctness of individuals"<sup>30</sup> is the distinctive characteristic. Each self, beyond the primary goods sought by the noumenal self, has a specific plan of life and its accompanying interests. Further,

. . . although the interests advanced by these plans are not assumed to be interests in the self, they are interests of a self [which might include benevolence] that regards its conception of the good as worthy of recognition and that advances claims in its behalf as deserving satisfaction.<sup>31</sup>

Again, these are not just the claims to the primary goods made by the noumenal self, but are a rich plurality of wants and resources, sometimes in harmony, sometimes in discord. He observes that

. . . men suffer from various shortcomings of knowledge, thought, and judgement. Their knowledge is necessarily incomplete, their powers of reasoning, memory, and attention are always limited, and their judgement is likely to be distorted by anxiety, bias, and a preoccupation with their own affairs. Some of these defects spring from moral faults, from selfishness and

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negligence; but to a large degree, they are simply part of men's natural situation. As a consequence individuals not only have different plans for life but there exists a diversity of philosophical and religious belief, and of political and social doctrines.<sup>32</sup>

In this passage, so laden with Rawls' view of our phenomenal nature, we can see in clear relief the diverse and contingent features of this self.

While he allows for the possibility of altruism and benevolence, Rawls paints a primarily self-interested picture, and at least on this point, seems to see the two selves as being essentially similar (or perhaps sees one manifestation of self dominating over the other). For example, to enter a compact whereby one would give up freedoms for the sake of a greater good for others would "exceed the capacity of human nature."<sup>33</sup> Moreover, "identification with the interests of others . . . is difficult to achieve,"<sup>34</sup> and there is "a definite limit on the strength of social and altruistic motivation."<sup>35</sup> As things are, we are in short supply of men "of great honesty with full confidence in one another."<sup>36</sup>

This being the case gives rise to other less noble features of most phenomenal selves. First, from "a self-

interested point of view each person is tempted to shirk doing his share" in a cooperative social scheme.<sup>37</sup>

Where the public is large and includes many individuals, there is a temptation for each person to try to avoid doing his share. . . . Even if all citizens were willing to pay their share [of taxes, for example], they would presumably do so only when they are assured that others will pay theirs as well.<sup>38</sup>

Although the noumenal self would act from considerations of right and rationality, the phenomenal self would not fulfill these ideals without assurances that others would too, whether it be in doing one's fair share, or maintaining one another's security in a social system. This fact of phenomenal human nature leads Rawls to conclude that "a coercive sovereign is presumably always necessary" and, as opposed to more altruistic or benevolent mechanisms, "the existence of effective penal machinery [would better serve] as men's security to one another."<sup>39</sup>

These all-against-all tendencies, so reminiscent of Hobbes, are not beyond correction in Rawls' description of our nature.

. . . But men's propensity to injustice is not a permanent aspect of community life; it is greater or less depending in large part on social institutions. . . . A well-ordered society tends to eliminate or at least control men's inclinations to injustice.<sup>40</sup>

As we have seen, all the features of our nature that are subject to variation as a function of environment belong in the phenomenal realm, and for Rawls, a great deal meets this criterion. Besides the propensity to injustice just cited, the ability to maintain self-respect, our wants and ends, our character traits, and more are dependent upon social accident, and are therefore phenomenal.

One of the most crucial primary goods, that of self-respect, is contingent, according to Rawls, on the respect of others.

. . . our self-respect normally depends on the respect of others. Unless we feel that our endeavors are honored by them, it is difficult if not impossible for us to maintain the conviction that our ends are worth advancing.<sup>41</sup>

This feature is important because it will play a part in

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shaping the kinds of societal and political arrangements that Rawls will have us embrace. He seems to find this need for the respect of others to be closely related to cooperative behavior in general:

. . . assuming that we desire the respect and good will of other persons, or at least to avoid their hostility and contempt, those plans of life will tend to be preferable which further their aims as well as our own.<sup>42</sup>

Perhaps this is connected with the functional impartiality of the original position; benevolence in exchange for good will seems closely akin to fairness through self-interest.

In regards to our wants and ends, it should be noted that a number of factors in addition to the larger social environment contribute to their formation (including, in a limited way, rational reflection, which we will explore below). Nor do our wants and ends change haphazardly, for we "cannot just decide at a given moment to alter our system of ends."<sup>43</sup> All the same, the environment does play a crucial role, for

. . . the social system shapes the wants and aspirations that its citizens come to have. It

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determines in part the sort of persons they want to be as well as the sort of persons they are. Thus an economic system is . . . a way of creating and fashioning wants in the future. How men work together now to satisfy their present desires affects the desires they will have later on, the kind of persons they will be.<sup>44</sup>

The environmental role here is clearly most important in the formation of wants and ends; the act of rational deliberation can have at least some influence on wants and desires, but is a minimal force in end formation, being primarily an instrumental power. Rawls asserts that even though it

. . . is obvious that deliberation leads us to have some desires that we did not have before, . . . except for these [limited] sorts of exceptions, we do not choose now what to desire now.<sup>45</sup>

Choices that we make ultimately rest on "a direct self-knowledge not only of what things we want but also of how much we want them."<sup>46</sup> Crediting Sidgwick, he outlines rationality's role as one of foreseeing the consequences of a given action. Ultimately,

. . . the best plan for an individual is the one he would adopt if he possessed full information. . . . [This] determines his real good.<sup>47</sup>

The seemingly subservient role of reason in the phenomenal self (where it is only a tool for the reckoning of outcomes aimed at satisfying ends not determined by reason), and the essential role of reason in the true self, presents a sharp contrast indeed.

Given the apparently infinite variety of individual conceptions of good represented in the plurality of wants and ends described above, it might be easy to forsake the notion of ever finding a pattern of wants and ends in phenomenal persons. Perhaps the meager list of primary goods, which one would presumably need to pursue any plan of life whatever, would be as much as we could assert about mankind in general. This, however, is not the case. Rawls feels he can discern certain principles of behavior (and, as discussed below, human development) that do affect the wants and ends of phenomenal persons in general. One important such intrinsic pattern of behavior he calls the Aristotelean Principle, and he summarizes the idea as follows:

. . . other things equal, human beings enjoy the exercise of their realized capacities (their innate or trained abilities), and this enjoyment increases the more the capacity is realized, or the greater its complexity. . . . [H]uman beings take more pleasure in doing something as they become more proficient at it, and of two activities they do equally well, they prefer the one calling on a larger repertoire of more intricate and subtle discriminations.<sup>48</sup>

If it turns out to be the case that this principle is in fact an underlying trait of human nature, and not simply another one of the many possible goods that people choose or choose not to pursue, then indeed it would be a valuable thing to know. Rawls, working from the assumption that it is true (does he find it self-evident?), makes explicit some of the applications it might be put to.

It accounts for many of our major desires, and explains why we prefer to do some things and not others by constantly exerting an influence over the flow of our activity. Moreover, . . . as a person's capacities increase over time, . . . he will in due course come to prefer the more complex

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activities.<sup>49</sup>

In fact, aside from the changes of untutored natural cultural and biological development, "it will generally be rational . . . to realize and train mature capacities."<sup>50</sup>

Another critical factor in the formation of our phenomenal nature is the family environment during childhood. Good character "depends in large part upon fortunate family . . . circumstances."<sup>51</sup> In fact, "the internal life and culture of the family influence, perhaps as much as anything else, a child's motivation and his capacity to gain from education." Moreover, "variations among families . . . shape the child's aspirations."<sup>52</sup> Besides character traits such as motivation, aspiration, and ability to learn, Rawls goes on to suggest as probable that our very moral scruples at least find their origins (if not their complete development) in the family, and they "are indeed largely shaped and accounted for by the contingencies of early childhood."<sup>53</sup>

Moral and psychological principles, even though they begin their formulation in early childhood, come to develop and have other manifestations in maturity. Rawls makes a rough outline of this development of psychological principles, at least insofar as the principles are related to the political or societal tendencies of the phenomenal

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self. After arguing for what he calls the three Principles of Moral Psychology, he summarizes them in the form of laws that will invariably take effect, other things being equal.

First law: given that family institutions are just, and that the parents love the child and manifestly express their love by caring for his good, then the child, recognizing their evident love of him, comes to love them.

Second law: given . . . attachments in accordance with the first law, and given that a social arrangement is just and publicly known by all to be just, then this person develops ties of friendly feeling and trust toward others in the association as they with evident intention comply with their duties and obligations. . . .

Third law: given . . . attachments in accordance with the first two laws, and given that a society's institutions are just and are publicly known by all to be just, then this person acquires the corresponding sense of justice as he recognizes that he and those for whom he cares are the beneficiaries of these arrangements.<sup>54</sup>.

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As people grow and mature, they gradually project their

feelings of good will (born out of a tendency to answer in kind) outward from their parents, to their fellows, and eventually to the institutions that serve them; importantly, this natural development is driven by that tendency to reciprocity that Rawls asserts is a "deep psychological fact."<sup>55</sup> This can be further observed in the fact that we tend to love whatever furthers or affirms our own good or interests.<sup>56</sup> No doubt, it is a deep trait of the phenomenal self, else it would have been introduced as a feature of the parties to the original position.

These psychological laws were formulated in discussions of moral development in general, and each of the laws corresponds to a period in that development as described by Rawls. The first law corresponds to the morality of authority, and both are concerned with childhood development;<sup>57</sup> the second law with the morality of association, these being concerned with the sentiments of good will toward one's associates, or perhaps even mankind in general;<sup>58</sup> and the third law with the morality of principles, which brings us to a full notion of right in a roughly Kantian sense.<sup>59</sup> This all shows how the moral sentiments and natural attitudes are closely related in Rawls' scheme.

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Now the connection between the natural

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consented to in the original position," <sup>64</sup> for these are just those principles that will encourage the appropriate development on all counts (both in the arrangements, and in our responses to them).

This sketch of the nature and origin of moral principles is tied together with his notion of what virtue is, and how we distinguish moral virtue from other excellences.

It is necessary, then, to distinguish the moral virtues from the natural assets. The latter we may think of as natural powers developed by education and training, and often exercised in accordance with certain characteristics intellectual or other standards by reference to which they can be roughly measured. The virtues on the other hand are sentiments and habitual attitudes leading us to act on certain principles of right. We can distinguish the virtues [and the natural assets] from each other by means of their corresponding principles.<sup>65</sup>

He goes on to define a good person in terms of moral virtue, keeping with a long tradition of thinkers who measure or define goodness in relation to moral virtue. Only his concept of what that virtue consists of is

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A good person . . . is someone who has to a higher degree . . . features of moral character that it is rational for the persons in the original position to want in one another. . . . [W]e could alternatively say that a good person has the features of moral character that it is rational for members of a well-ordered society to want in their associates.<sup>66</sup>

This concludes an admittedly scant (yet I would say adequate for our purposes) survey of Rawls' complex and sometimes obscure view of human nature. The noumenal/phenomenal split (whether it be heuristic, metaphysical or psychological), the role of rationality, and general facts about phenomenal wants, predispositions, abilities, and development have all been given at least cursory examination. We shall now turn to how this picture of human nature fits into his ideas of social justice, beginning with a brief description of the conclusions Rawls reaches about the principles and institutions we should implement in the societal/political setting.

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## CHAPTER 4

### RAWLS ON POLITICAL THEORY

In the previous chapter, which concerned Rawls' theory of human nature, we made frequent references to the parties to the original position, alluding to the fact that their ultimate function would be to choose, fairly and impartially, appropriate principles of justice (or more precisely, those of social justice, which he explicitly states is the primary area of his inquiry);<sup>1</sup> we deliberately postponed exposition of the specific prescriptions that Rawls makes concerning the basic structure of society (which is the proper focus of social justice), and we shall now take up those issues. His widely discussed basic principles of justice, and the implications these principles and procedures have in the construction or reform of social and political institutions, will be examined.

The principles of social justice are principles of what Rawls calls formal justice, or the "impartial and consistent administration of laws and institutions, whatever their substantive principles."<sup>2</sup> He distinguishes this type of justice from those areas of inquiry that are concerned with the principles that "apply to individuals

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and their actions in particular circumstances."<sup>3</sup> Given this tack, it is plain that Rawls, if he is not exploring a particular political theory, is at least positing principles that will claim jurisdiction over important facets of any political theory whatever.

The principles of justice are a production of the parties in the original position, suitably positioned behind the veil of ignorance, acting in their own interest in the the pursuit of the primary goods. Before beginning in earnest, it is in order that we have at least some idea of how Rawls came to the list of primary goods outlined earlier.

. . . [T]he list of primary goods can be accounted for by the conception of goodness as rationality in conjunction with the general facts about human wants and abilities, their characteristic phases and requirements of nurture, the Aristotelean Principle, and the necessities of social interdependence.<sup>4</sup>

It is not suprising that he rests his claims about the list of primary goods on what he conceives human beings to be; after all, to know what humans will want in general requires that we know something about what human beings

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are. From this rather complete knowledge of phenomenal self, and the knowledge about phenomenal wants in general that follows, we can, if we are first able to be completely impartial, come to the principles of justice.

So what is it that the parties to the original position come to in the way of an agreement? What is arrived at when they seek to "decide once and for all what is to count . . . as just and unjust?"<sup>5</sup> Straight away, and stated most simply, he wishes to see justice as fairness. This general concern for fairness, through the original position, we are able to metamorphize into two explicit principles of justice that guide the rest of Rawls' deliberations on the assessment of the basic structure of society. His first formulation of the principles, incomplete and uncontroversial in light of what he eventually arrives at, is as follows:

First: each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others.

Second: social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all.<sup>6</sup>

This initial formulation makes an evolution of sorts, being modified and subjected to certain constraints Rawls calls priority rules. It is this final capsulization that we will discuss fully.

#### First Principle

Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all.

#### Second Principle

Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both:

(a) to the greatest benefit of the least [my emphasis] advantaged, consistent with the just savings principle, and

(b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.

#### First Priority Rule (The Priority of Liberty)

The principles of justice are to be ranked in lexical order and therefore liberty can be restricted only for the sake of liberty. There are two cases:

(a) a less extensive liberty must strengthen

the total system of liberty shared by all;

(b) a less than equal liberty must be acceptable to those with the lesser liberty.

Second Priority Rule (The Rule of Justice over Efficacy and Welfare)

The second principle of justice is lexically prior to the principle of efficiency and to that of maximizing the sum of advantages; and fair opportunity is prior to the difference principle.

There are two cases:

(a) an inequality of opportunity must enhance the opportunities of those with the lesser opportunity;

(b) an excessive rate of saving must on balance mitigate the burden of those bearing this hardship.

General Conception

All social primary goods--liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the bases of self-respect--are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any or all of these goods is to the advantage of the least favored.<sup>7</sup>

This lengthy statement of the principles of justice is more

or less complete, and we will explore it point by point, using it as a map to Rawls' theory.

The first principle of justice, which prescribes a system that maximizes individual liberty, so long as the liberty can be enjoyed by everyone, is perhaps the least controversial of Rawls' assertions. Such a commitment to liberty has a distinguished group of advocates dating at least as far back as the onset of our modern world (however one might choose to delineate it). His conception of equal liberty stresses the importance of us recognizing that "the basic liberties must be assessed as a whole, as one system."<sup>8</sup> Because different liberties can and do collide when left unrestricted, it is necessary to take the whole system of liberties under consideration when evaluating whether the maximum amount of liberty has, under the circumstances, been achieved. Moreover, he points to the difference between liberty taken in isolation from one's circumstances (or more exactly, one's wherewithal to use a given amount of liberty to advance one's ends), and the effective amount of liberty one has when these circumstances are taken into account.

. . . [L]iberty and the worth of liberty are distinguished as follows: liberty is represented by the complete system of liberties of equal

citizenship, while the worth of liberty to persons and groups is proportional to their capacity to advance their ends within the framework the system defines. Freedom as equal liberty is the same for all; . . . the worth of liberty is not the same for everyone. Some have greater authority and wealth, and therefore greater means to achieve their aims.<sup>9</sup>

Rawls makes clear that effective liberty is what ought to be maximized, and surely the freedom to starve, and perhaps the freedom to fail in less catastrophic ways, will not be a good to be maximized. The functioning of the basic structure of society should "maximize the worth [of liberty] [my emphasis] to the least advantaged."<sup>10</sup> Given this distinction, the first principle, with its equal system of liberties, will not be quite enough to ensure the equality Rawls is seeking--with this in mind we can turn our attention to the second principle of justice.

The second principle addresses the social and economic inequalities that will be permitted in a perfectly just society, which, among other things, goes to the root of just how we will enhance the worth of liberty to each person--social and economic goods are the wherewithal one needs to use liberty. Whenever the structure of society sanctions giving one person or group more of the primary

goods than another, it must be justified in terms of improving the lot of the least advantaged sector.<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that the difference or disparity between the least advantaged and the best off is not unlimited, even if it can apparently, at one level, be justified in terms of the worst off group; if the disparity is so great as to affect the self-esteem of the less fortunate (since self-esteem is one, and perhaps the most important, of the primary goods), or becomes so great as to prohibit the system's implementation (due to this very loss of self-esteem or the possible arousal of justified envy or rancor), it cannot be countenanced.<sup>12</sup> Aside from these considerations that affect the advantages accrued by the worst off group in the contemporary society, only a just savings for the coming generation is to be factored into determining how the available wealth is to be distributed.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, as the second part of the principle states explicitly, the advantages must be attached to offices or positions that are open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity. Now this idea of equal opportunity is somewhat ambiguous; not only is social class not to enter into deciding who shall be appointed to positions of higher reward and who not,<sup>14</sup> but when he says that there is "no more reason to permit the distribution . . . to be

settled by natural assets than by social or historical fortune,"<sup>15</sup> he seems to imply that merit is not a just criterion for selecting persons to these advantaged positions. This would of course, be a problematic construal of the second principle; what other criteria might one use for selecting people for difficult or demanding positions other than their talents for doing the job effectively? As it turns out, this (that is, ignoring relevant merits in selection to advantaged positions) is not precisely what Rawls means for us to do. Even though merit (whether it be gotten from the lottery of natural endowment, or through the virtues of hard work and motivation, which, because of the strong influence of a fortunate family or social environment, are just as arbitrarily distributed) is not to be used as a factor in designing the social system, it is perfectly legitimate to consider it inside the presumably cooperative social scheme, which is, after all, in place to the advantage of the worst off group.

It is perfectly true that given a just system of cooperation . . . those who . . . have done what the system announces that it will reward are entitled to their advantages. In this sense the more fortunate have a claim to their better situation; . . . But this sense of desert

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presupposes the existence of a cooperative scheme; it is irrelevant to the question whether in the first place the scheme is to be designed in accordance with the difference principle or some other criterion. . . .

. . . Thus the more advantaged representative man cannot say that he deserves . . . a scheme of cooperation [my emphasis] in which he is permitted to acquire benefits in ways that do not contribute to the welfare of others.<sup>16</sup>

There is yet another reason for fair opportunity, one that is analogous to the last reason cited above for equal distribution. If opportunities are not made open to all social and economic groups (even if one might make a case for excluding a group for the welfare of the least advantaged), the excluded group would "be right in feeling unjustly treated" even if they benefited from the arrangement, for their loss would be in something even more important: "the realization of self which comes from a skillful and devoted exercise of social duties. They would be deprived of one of the main forms of human good."<sup>17</sup>

And so as far as the two main principles of justice are concerned, we should do all that we can to rectify, or even out, the inequalities of liberty, opportunity, wealth

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and the like. The factors that have hitherto determined the distribution of these goods are morally irrelevant, and should have no bearing. Institutions should be developed and educational projects undertaken from early childhood onward, all toward the purpose of fair and equal starting points and equitable progress along the way. In fact, one of the primary roles of education (the other, that of inculcating a sense of justice in order to maintain the stability of a well-ordered society, is discussed below) is to "redress the bias of contingencies in the direction of equality."<sup>18</sup> The earlier years of schooling in particular are to have their purpose not merely in terms of the returns the society on average would receive in the way of greater efficiency and greater numbers of trained workers, but to equalize opportunities to whatever extent is possible and to enrich "the personal and social life of citizens, including here the less favored."<sup>19</sup> Using this idea as a guiding principle, we would do better to spend more resources on the education of "the less rather than the more intelligent."<sup>20</sup> We should take account of "the accidents of human nature and social circumstance" when determining the distribution of social goods "only" when doing so is for the common benefit,<sup>21</sup> or as he subsequently makes clear throughout the text, to the benefit of the least advantaged group.

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To elaborate briefly on the priority rules following the principles of justice: the gist of the priority rules is only that the principles of justice are lexically ordered. If and when the principles conflict, there is a definite 'pecking order' to be observed. First, liberty is highest on the priority list. No liberty is to be restricted unless that restriction would somehow add to the total system of liberty, and those subject to the restriction find it acceptable. This would seem to prohibit restricting the liberty of any group in order to see to an increase in other, material social goods, even for the least advantaged. Second, both principles of justice have priority over any other consideration, whether it be utilitarian judgements about the sum of advantages or concerns over efficiency; within the principles of justice, the principle of equal opportunity takes precedence over the principles that speak to equal distribution of other primary goods. In the case of restricted opportunity, it is plain to see that the only justification would be another advantage in opportunity to those restricted. In cases of burdensome rates of savings, the saving parties (or their direct descendants) must be the direct beneficiaries.

Given these principles of justice, it is incumbent on us to use them in judging legislation, social policies, constitutional arrangements, and the limits of political

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duty and obligation in our real world. No doubt, "some sort of framework is needed to simplify the application [my emphasis] of the two principles of justice."<sup>22</sup> To this end, Rawls outlines what he calls the four-stage sequence, whereby we can gradually take the principles of justice out from behind the veil of ignorance and into the world of our interests and biases. Knowledge about the particulars of our situation is introduced gradually in each stage, in each instance allowing the parties only so much as they need to make the required judgements, but no more.

The flow of information is determined at each stage by what is required in order to apply [the principles of justice] . . . to the . . . question at hand, while . . . any knowledge that is likely to give rise to bias and distortion . . . is ruled out. The notion of rational and impartial application of principles defines the kind of knowledge that is admissible.<sup>23</sup>

The first and second stages are likened by Rawls to a constitutional convention.<sup>24</sup> In it, the parties must first evaluate the various political forms in terms of their justice, and then choose one to implement in their society. Here, the veil of ignorance is only partially lifted: while

the parties may now know the relevant facts about their particular society, such as natural circumstances, available resources, economic level and political culture, they are still ignorant of the particulars of their individual situations, in regards to their social position, natural abilities and conceptions of the good. After narrowing the field of possible political forms (which Rawls assumes will be restricted to some set of constitutional democracies, since no other forms would embody the required liberties), the problem is then "to select from among the procedural arrangements that are both just and feasible those which are most likely to lead to a just and effective legal order."<sup>25</sup> To do this effectively, they must know, in addition to the information allowed above, "the beliefs and interests that men in the system are liable to have and . . . the political tactics that they will find it rational to use." So long as particular individuals or groups are not introduced at this point, a fair implementation of the principles of justice can proceed.

The third stage is the legislative stage.<sup>26</sup> At this point, after a just constitution has been framed, "the justice of laws and policies is to be assessed," using both the principles of justice and the limits of the constitution chosen as standards. Since the work of the

second stage was to determine which of the possible just constitutions would be most likely to produce an effective and just social arrangement, it should be obvious that the results of this third stage might require us to go back and reevaluate the decision made in the second. If we judge legislation to be unjust (which Rawls admits is often the subject of reasonable differences of opinion--a problem to be broached in the next chapter), we may wish to return to the second stage armed with the new and no doubt unforeseen knowledge of this unjust legislation and start again. It is by "moving back and forth between the stages . . . [that] the best constitution is found."

The last stage is where judges and administrators apply the rules accepted in the third stage.<sup>27</sup> At this point, a complete access to all the facts is both relevant and necessary in order to perform the task; moreover, since the rules have already been established, and apply to all persons, this knowledge will not affect the justice of the procedure. So long as the rules are in fact followed, our principles of justice will be in force; any discrepancies from this ideal, that is, cases that result in injustice even though our rules have been followed, would be an unhappy feature of any political arrangement, and is just what we were trying to minimize in our four-stage sequence.

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Clearly, any feasible political procedure may yield an unjust outcome. In . . . any political form, the ideal of perfect procedural justice [where all we must do is follow a given procedure to be guaranteed a just outcome] cannot be realized. The best attainable scheme is one of imperfect procedural justice.<sup>28</sup>

In light of this possibility of unjust results in even the most carefully chosen of just societies, Rawls allows for the possibility of morally justified civil disobedience.<sup>29</sup> His ideas on this problem make even clearer the foundations of his theory of justice. Plainly, the will of a majority has moral force only insofar as it complies with the principles of justice; in fact, it derives its authority from the principles, and not simply from the fact that it is a majority.

The justification for it [majority rule] rests squarely on the political ends that the constitution is designed to achieve, and therefore on the two principles of justice.<sup>30</sup>

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On the other side of the issue, the disobedient party can justify his actions only in terms of the principles of

justice, and must assume the constraints of the original position to make his case; no appeal to his particular interests or desires can be made.

. . . [C]ivil disobedience is a political act not only in . . . that it is addressed to the [political] majority . . . but also because it . . . is guided and justified by political principles, that is, by the principles of justice which regulate the constitution and social institutions generally. In justifying civil disobedience, one does not appeal to . . . personal morality or religious doctrines . . . [or to] group or self-interest. Instead, one invokes the commonly shared conception of justice that underlies the political order.<sup>31</sup>

These isolated cases of the system failing us aside, we should have a fair, or at least the fairest possible, procedural system in place if we apply the four-stage sequence. Rawls nicely summarizes some of the features of this system in regards to how, in particular, it will address and implement the requirements of the principles of justice.

. . . [T]he basic structure is regulated by a just

constitution that secures the liberties of equal citizenship. . . . Liberty of conscience and freedom of thought are taken for granted, and the fair value of political liberty is maintained. The political process is conducted . . . as a just procedure for choosing between governments and for enacting legislation. I assume also that there is fair . . . equality of opportunity. . . . [T]he government tries to insure equal chances of education and culture for persons similarly endowed and motivated either by subsidizing private schools or establishing a public school system. It also enforces and underwrites equality of opportunity in economic activities and in the free choice of occupation. This is achieved by policing the conduct of firms and private associations and by preventing the establishment of monopolistic restrictions and barriers to the more desirable positions. Finally, the government guarantees a social minimum either by family allowances and special payments for sickness and employment, or more systematically by such devices as graded income supplement (a so-called negative income tax).<sup>32</sup>

This rather specific picture shows us much of the just order that Rawls envisages, and the arrangement he describes here is no doubt what he calls a well-ordered society.

. . . [A] society is well-ordered when it is not only designed to advance the good of its members but when it is also effectively regulated by a public conception of justice. That is, it is a society in which (1) everyone accepts and knows that the others accept the same principles of justice, and (2) the basic social institutions generally satisfy and are generally known to satisfy these principles.<sup>33</sup>

As an ideal that any society must be measured against, this public conception of justice constitutes the "fundamental charter of a well-ordered human association," even if actually existing societies are "seldom well-ordered in this sense."<sup>34</sup> Justice as fairness, or Rawls' entire scheme, is constructed to be well-ordered, for as we have seen, the parties to the original position had knowledge about whether the principles chosen would be accepted in the phenomenal world, and took this knowledge into account in making their choices.<sup>35</sup>

The problem of everyone accepting the principles of justice in Rawls' version of a well-ordered society is closely related to the issue of how everyone will come to know the principles that are being implemented and their acceptance of the various institutions which in fact are that implementation. The principles of moral psychology and the theory of moral development sketched in the previous chapter account for a good deal of the acceptance and propogation of the principles of justice in his well-ordered society. In that sketch, his aim

. . . is to indicate the major steps whereby a person would acquire an understanding of and an attachment to the principles of justice as he grows up in this particular form of well-ordered society.<sup>36</sup>

Hand in hand with this natural psychological development would be active and purposive moral education for the young in the principles of justice. In a well-ordered society, one's moral education will be "regulated by the principles of right and justice to which he would consent in an initial situation in which all have equal representaion as a moral person."<sup>37</sup> This being the case, no one would object to this moral training as some

sort of dogmatic indoctrination; the object is not to cleverly install psychological mechanisms for the interests of those in power, nor is it merely to bring about some appropriate moral sentiment. The educational system, in its moral capacity, takes the limitations of human nature into account, and assists in the inculcation of a sense of justice--the authority for this charter derives from what we would accept in the original position, for "in agreeing to principles of right . . . [we] at the same time consent to the arrangements necessary to make these principles effective in their conduct."<sup>38</sup>

On a more specific level, it is interesting to note that in order to execute the above noted responsibilities of government, especially in regards to the second principle, we must construct and maintain certain background institutions; in Rawls' society, the government would be divided into five functional areas, or branches, and each "branch consists of various agencies, or activities thereof, charged with preserving certain social and economic conditions."<sup>39</sup>

The allocation branch would keep the price system as competitive as possible, constrained only by "the requirements of efficiency and the facts of geography and the preferences of households." To this end, it must, of course, take steps to prevent unreasonable market power

from accumulating with any particular organization. Apparently, the price system in Rawls' scheme is the best tool to fairly measure and deliver social costs and benefits, and these distributive and allocative functions will obtain to varying degrees in almost any fully implemented just system.<sup>40</sup>

The stabilization branch<sup>41</sup> strives for "reasonably full employment in the sense that those who want work can find it" and free choice of occupation, which presumably means that those similarly endowed and motivated will have equal chances to attain more advantaged positions (though we should remember that the advantages attached to these better jobs are only justified in terms of how the arrangements work to the good of the worst off people). The stabilization branch works in concert with the above described allocation branch to generally keep the market economy working efficiently, in that contributors to the economy have opportunity and motivation and the resultant goods are produced and distributed in the most efficient way possible.

Maintaining a suitable social minimum would be the concern of the transfer branch,<sup>42</sup> which would make adjustments to income and required payments to that end. The branch would clearly be necessary, since "a competitive price system [while it is probably the most efficient] gives

no consideration to needs and therefore . . . cannot be the sole device of distribution." This is not to imply that the transfer branch would replace the market workings of the allocation/stabilization branches; it would merely constrain it when it tended to allow income to fall below that point where satisfaction of basic needs and "an appropriate standard of life" were possible. Yet once this has been established, "it may be perfectly fair that the rest of total income be settled by the price system," so long as it is functioning efficiently and free from monopoly.

A distribution branch<sup>43</sup> would maintain approximate equality of distributive shares through taxation and adjustment to property rights. There would be two guiding principles (derived from the principles of justice) to this branch. First, taxes and levies on income and inheritance are designed to "gradually and continually . . . correct the distribution of wealth and . . . the concentration of power," for failure to do so would be detrimental to "the fair value of political liberty and fair equality of opportunity." Second, the revenue raised by these adjustments would give government the wherewithal to pay out the transfers that justice requires.

Lastly, an exchange branch<sup>44</sup> would serve to decide on the undertaking and financing of public projects that are

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not by their nature a matter of justice or injustice. That is, even if the other four branches have accomplished a just economic arrangement, further public concerns of mutual benefit will surely arise. This branch would be a representative body, and would consider providing "public goods and services where the market mechanism breaks down" so long as the matters were "independent from what justice requires." Any such projects and their financing should be "agreed upon, if not unanimously, then approximately so."

Hopefully, we now have an overview of Rawls' vision of a just political arrangement sufficient for our purposes. Having finished brief expositions of theories of human nature and theories of political arrangement for both Dewey and Rawls, it remains for us to make some correlative and critical observations.

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## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION: A CRITICAL AND CORRELATIVE ANALYSIS

What might be said about what we have outlined in the preceding chapters? First, there are some rather immediate questions and criticisms to be raised concerning the theories of both Dewey and Rawls, and these problems will be addressed directly to each of the areas delimited up to this point: Dewey on human nature, Dewey on the state, Rawls on human nature, and Rawls on political theory. Realizing that there are a good many points that could be made in these areas, to forestall possible criticisms of incompleteness I will say now that I wish to restrict my comments to what I see as related, whether directly or indirectly, to the project of this thesis. Next, we will attend to what sort of general correlative observations that might be possible, looking for and exploring relationships both between Dewey and Rawls, and within each thinker's views on human nature and politics.

One persistent theme in Dewey's writing on human nature is the idea that all behavior is a function of the interaction between organism and environment; natural impulses and habits are never manifested in a vacuum and take their form and are satisfied in very concrete

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circumstances.<sup>1</sup> The affect that the impulses of nature and previously formed habits have on overt behavior is always exerted in concert with the environmental factors that the impulses and habits are realized in, and hence the behavior is a result of both organic and environmental influences. But can Dewey be right in asserting that all behavior is a function of the organism and its relation to the environment? Perhaps, but there are several ways that one could make this claim, some being stronger than others.

First, we should make some distinctions about what will count as behavior, or couched in Dewey's terms, an interaction between organism and environment. Is genetic adaptation to the environment a type of behavior, as we hinted at in the introduction to this thesis? Is there a distinction to be made between habits formed as a result of adaptation and learning in a single life and biological impulses formed as a result of adaptation and 'learning' over a stretch of lives, communicated through genetic material? Given the holistic tone of Dewey's arguments, I would say no; yet this brings into focus just how complex and variagated Dewey's view becomes when pressed. At one temporal level, change in genetic material is the behavior, being the outcome of the material's ability (an impulse?) to reproduce itself and the action of an environment that only parcels out survival to a limited number of

arrangements. Yet at another temporal level, the genetic content, and the natural impulses it gives to the organism (hunger, sex drive, nurturing impulses, perhaps much more), is then functioning as one of the contributors to the behavior observed, interacting with the same said environment that helped give rise to the genes in the first place.

If we take this view, and blur any difference between natural impulses (which are apparently fixed in a single life) and habits (which presumably can and often do change within a single life), then Dewey's assertion is not as problematic; in this case, even our instincts and genetic make-up are results of the organism in relation to the environment, even if at a level once removed, and over a long period of time. But if we allow for the distinction in some form, giving natural impulse a fixed role as a contributor to behavior, as Dewey appears to, then the notion of almost infinite plasticity in overt behavior must be examined with more scrutiny. It is certainly not obviously true that there is an almost limitless number of ways to manifest a given 'blind' natural impulse, even if the environment is, in principle, almost limitless in what it can present to the impulse. While eating, sleeping, sexual behavior and the like can obviously be accommodated in a rich variety of ways, it would hardly be fair to say

that the ways in which these impulses can be satisfied is limitless or infinite. The ways in which the organism can be frustrated to the point of grave distress or death seem to be much greater in number, making the viable choices seem like a narrow range in comparison. Yet even if we interpret Dewey to mean that behavior, or our nature, is subject to some variation as a function of the environment, rather than to say that it is almost limitless in that respect, we could have reason to believe that even this weaker claim might not be completely true.

Could it be that more, perhaps much more, of what constitutes our behaviors and dispositions is determined biologically than Dewey seems to have assumed? By biologically determined, I mean what could be loosely termed 'hard-wired' in the overused vernacular of the computer analogy. Making this meaning clear is necessary because many people are certain that anything we do, since it is ultimately a result of brain activity, is ultimately biologically determined; hence, learning, habit formation, or any response to the environment at all is biological in this sense. My general sympathy toward this view aside, it is useful for our present purposes to maintain a functional distinction between adaptive behavior in a single life, and those innate impulses and behavior determining factors that we must somehow accomodate, and affect our behavior no less

relentlessly than external environment. This understood, the thing to be determined is how specifically these biological influences dictate to behavior; Dewey has presupposed that their dictation is indeterminate without the concurrent action of the external environment.

In what seems to be evidence against Dewey's view, animal instincts appear amazingly incorrigible in the way they determine a creature's behavior. While many of these behaviors most certainly take environmental cues, to assert that the specific forms they will assume once commenced is variable depending on environment is a strong claim that should be proved experimentally, not asserted a priori. Regular and predictable behavior in human infants presents an easy analogy to the animal instincts here; along the same lines, and just as suggestive, are findings in sociobiology that tend to support theories of specific instinctual dispositions in adult humans such as territorial imperatives, aggression, incest avoidance, facial expressions in verbal communication, and mother-infant bonding behavior.<sup>2</sup> Studies on identical twins raised in separate environments (that is, separate families, being similar only in ways that conventional psychological theories would assume to have no significant or interesting influence on similarity of development) have noted significant similarities in their abilities and

behavior patterns, strongly suggesting that genetic make-up could determine things that Dewey surely assumed to be environmentally determined.<sup>3</sup>

The point of the just cited examples is not to refute Dewey's assertions, but this: the extent to which instinct, or some other form of biological 'hard wiring,' specifically determines the character of behavior is something that can and should be determined by observation and study. Regardless of how seductive the holistic approach is generally, when we take the functionally set off single life, there are features of it, from the practical perspective of trying to determine what causes certain behaviors, that might not be influenced significantly by the environment. Importantly, we should not assume that because a holistic view is hard to argue against when taking a longer view, it must also apply or tell us anything useful when carving out a smaller functional unit. This issue cannot be approached in an a priori manner, but it seems that Dewey, the avowed experimentalist, has done just that.

Even if we take up Dewey's scheme as it is presented, and accept for the sake of argument that all behavior is controlled by habit, we might question his great confidence in the ability of the habit of intelligence to modify or change the other habits that constitute our nature. It

seems vital that he try to explain this in light of what he admits is the near incorrigibility of habits in adults.<sup>4</sup> Why will the momentum of a previously entrenched habit, or the lag time invariably present in changing habitual behavior, be so much easier to manage under the direction of the habit of intelligence? The problem of how intelligence relates to the other habits leads us into Dewey's political ideas.

If habits are to be characterized by this aversion to change, how can we effectively manage the consequences of our collective behavior, which is at the very foundation of what a state is? When there is the desire to, and possibility of, changing behavior in the short term, specifically in the case of adults to whom intelligent appeals can be made, the process is hideously difficult due to the force of already engrained habit. In the case of children, while change is much easier and the habits more plastic, the lag time is too long to foresee exactly what sort of specific habits we ought to be inculcating; circumstances might, and in fact, probably would, change a good deal before the children reached adulthood. Then the changes made necessary by the intelligent perception of the new environment would have to be made against the forces of the previously formed habits. The whole process of trying to adapt to a dynamic environment through the education of

children would be akin to the labors of Sisyphus. Dewey seems sensitive to the futility of attempting to form specific habitual behaviors in the education of children, and he calls on us instead to stress the general virtues of flexibility and intelligence.<sup>5</sup> Of course, this discussion leaves out a good deal of Dewey's thought on education, but this narrow facet of his educational ideas helps to focus his position on intelligence and the other habits; apparently, he hopes in the long run to see the power of intelligence over other types of habitual behavior amplified.

While I think that Dewey is surely right in assuming that intelligence is the best tool we have in directing our lives and welfare, I do not share his unbridled optimism that we can make it a significantly more effective force than it already is, or has been for the stretch of recorded history. Living under the burden of habits (and in all probability, a set of instinctual demands and limitations), both helpful and hurtful, is, in my mind, an inescapable aspect of the human condition; we can reasonably hope that the habit of intelligence will play a role in brokering between conflicting habits and natural impulses, and may work to ameliorate the problems we experience, but expectations of radical improvements are probably misplaced. Recognizing rightly the office and functioning

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of intelligence cannot alter its position, or guarantee us a chance of improving its efficiency; discovery of this natural process does not necessarily give us additional control over its inevitable workings. Essentially, we must ask ourselves if we are as capable of rational self-direction as Dewey's theory seems to assert, or whether we might be more under the control of historical forces of habit and biology than Dewey would like to admit.

Dewey's thinking on the state starts with the idea that the state is decidedly not some mysterious or metaphysical entity;<sup>6</sup> it is merely the institutions and officials that we put in place to regulate consequences. It, like other features of culture in general, has no existence outside of the fact that it is a collection of shared habits.<sup>7</sup> Even if this is the case, Dewey's analysis ignores to a large degree some relevant features of this arrangement that would seem to lend credence to, and give some description of, some properties of the state that he rejects as bogus and feels most of his predecessors are simply mistaken about. Specifically, the shared habits, which when they are observed as a group make up what we might call our culture and the state, do not seem to have a separate ontological status for Dewey; he appears to dismiss such ideas as metaphysical speculation. But does not this cultural commonality, being passed from one

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generation to the next and exhibiting characteristics and influences over time as if it had an ontological life of its own, have some sort of separate existence in a sense?<sup>8</sup> The idea that the state is nothing more than the steps we take to regulate recognized consequences entails that we might, and in some cases do, easily make the state new again and again; conversely, the inertia of a group of shared habits, as opposed to the inertia of single individual habits, seems synergistically more powerful, and might profitably be talked about as a 'state-making' or 'state-maintaining' force that would vigorously resist quick change. In addition to this momentum, children grow up in particular cultures with particular states, and will tend, other things being equal, to be socialized into and adopt the existing order. Dewey acknowledges the existence of the shared habits (that is, the state), and the cultural nature of this sector of our environment, but can they change as easily as he thinks? We have already discussed some possible problems with believing that change is quite so easily managed. And if it is not as easy as Dewey postulates, we must recognize 'the state' as being powerful beyond even individual habits because of social reinforcement and socialization of the young; we must recognize that there is more to the state than just consequences and their intelligent regulation. To Dewey's

credit, his experimental attitude toward inquiry would seem to allow him to incorporate any empirical findings that might be found, including those that could radically restructure the picture of the state he paints for us in the texts we have considered.

Throughout his analysis of state-making and state-maintaining forces, there is a question that Dewey is noticably silent on. That is, what should we call the forms of rule throughout our history that do not conform to Dewey's rather democratic and dynamic model? Are tyrannies states? Oligarchies? Monarchies? Observable governments fall woefully short of Dewey's model, and could not be called true states almost by definition; at least insofar as they ignore the consequences experienced by the masses and wield power to their own advantage, governments are not acting as states. In attempting to clarify what Dewey means by a state, and what he might call a form of rule that did not conform to his 'explanatory' model, it becomes clear what Dewey has in effect accomplished. Even though he ostensibly sets out to construct a descriptive and empirical analysis of states, it is safe to observe that this model is normative in many ways rather than descriptive, irrespective of how we might eventually puzzle out the meanings of the terms involved.

If Dewey the experimentalist has certain partially

hidden, and perhaps unwitting, a priori and normative elements in his ideas, Rawls' thought would have to be characterized as just the reverse: his scheme is clearly and openly normative, and it is only the actual workability and empirical elements of his ideas that remain to be rooted out for examination (which we will in fact attend to below). In thinking about human nature, Rawls is primarily concerned with what we ought to be, and how we as phenomenal creatures should express and manifest our true and noumenal selves. There is a deep and common nature that we can act in accordance with if we can only free ourselves of the poison of phenomenal self-interest and prejudice.

To begin, consider Rawls' inclusion of self-respect among the primary goods to be distributed.<sup>9</sup> It is plain that the fair or complete distribution of self-respect, which is ultimately so dependent on the respect of others, requires a Kantian attitude toward one's fellow man; this is a huge and unavoidable normative component in Rawls' theory. That which becomes crystal clear when considering self-respect applies likewise to the motivation for distribution of the other primary goods, and indeed, to the acceptance of any portion of Rawls' theory whatever. If the original position is a hypothetical situation, why should we in the real world be moved to accept anything decided there? Even if it was a window to the noumenal self, why

then? What enjoins us to be fair in this way? It is obviously a Kantian idea of treating others as ends in themselves, and never as means, and it is related to the difficult question of why we do anything of a moral nature at all. Rawls of course freely admits that his theory is Kantian in inclination, and it does not count as a criticism to merely point out the normative elements of any theory. The point of this observation is that while Rawls makes reference to our considered judgements (and we might ask just whose judgements he means by 'our' judgements), he invariably ends up appealing, in a way that is either direct or implied, to this one considered judgement, the categorical imperative. The critical question being posed is whether Rawls has done something more than assert this moral primitive, and if he has, whether what he asserts is the result of a consistent and coherent project.

After all, if our considered judgements in reflective equilibrium are the measure of whether or not the theory is working, why should we not appeal to them in the first place?<sup>10</sup> Will discrepancies between considered judgements really be resolved by some overarching theory? More likely, someone who disagreed with our considered judgements would simply reject the theory we held based on them. In fact, even Rawls seems to be willing to tinker with the original position to have the decisions made in it conform to his

(our?) considered judgements; the motivational assumption in regards to justice between generations and just savings is a glaring ad hoc adjustment. Even deeper along these lines is the entire structure of the original position, with the various constraints the parties to it have been subjected to: the design of the original position was created on this side of the veil of ignorance, with our preconceptions about what we are looking for in a just system built in. Further, what we will accept as just depends on whether it is workable or acceptable in an actual society. What advantage does the original position give us over simply heeding Rawls in his moral exhortation to be fair and treat others as equals? If the theory is simply a heuristic device for clarifying our intuitions, then so be it; in that case, I feel he has missed the mark on some very dearly held considered judgements indeed (as discussed below). If the theory provides us with something more than a heuristic device, and mandates Rawls' assertions with claim to some moral authority, then we are missing some critical justification.

Allowing, for the sake of argument, that Rawls' original position is a useful device or conception, we should ask if he himself has used it correctly in arriving at principles of justice that will regulate our societal and political arrangements. In one brief aside, Rawls

quietly admits that if he is mistaken about some aspect of our phenomenal nature, and what the folk will accept and embrace as just, then he will have to revise what we have decided once and for all.<sup>11</sup> Presumably, the best way to determine whether or not the principles chosen will work is to try them in practice, allowing the results to in turn inform the original position in making any necessary revisions. When this concession is made, it becomes in effect an Achilles heel, for the timeless conception of justice, and the moral geometry Rawls seeks, when put into practice, looks suspiciously like a stripe of experimentalism.

Short of actually implementing the difference principle in a society, and waiting anxiously for success or disaster, we can reasonably wonder as to whether Rawls is correct in assuming the idea will be acceptable in an actual society. If a significant portion of phenomenal selves, by their nature, will not recognize and abide by the difference principle, we will then be forced to reject it. Will rich and talented folk accept Rawls' scheme? Hard working people? Has he correctly gauged phenomenal human nature in this respect? Asserting that they would accept it entails that people do not deserve what they earn as a matter of principle, and as a basis for justice. Denying that there are factors of virtue that are independent of

the random and morally irrelevant forces of natural and social accident implies a lack of phenomenal responsibility for one's own actions and character; it implies that we do not deserve benefits in relation to our actions. This implication seems to place quite a heavy burden of proof on Rawls, since he vows to take the facts of our considered judgements, which would surely include this notion, as a starting point. Even Marx includes in his philosophy the maxim that the worker deserves the benefits that are a result of his labor. Being to the left of Marx on this count makes it doubtful that Rawls is speaking to 'our' considered judgements. Even if he did make a convincing case for the moral strength of his position (which, I should hope is clear, I do not think he has done), he failed to mention one aspect of the phenomenal constraints that he tells us any principle of justice must be measured against for workability: as we asked of Dewey, has the strength of societal 'inertia' been adequately addressed? In the specific case of ideas tying desert to actions? More generally, in advocating fundamental change of any kind in a society?

Further, how far can we take fair equality of opportunity? Should we abolish the family to ensure equality of starting points? Rawls stops short of that<sup>12</sup> (in another apparently ad hoc adjustment), but even the

broad positive action he does advocate in leveling out starting points seems once again to denigrate the concept of personal responsibility for one's position given a 'careers open to talents' society. The talents one would use to take advantage of a career opportunity are apparently out of one's personal control, and should have no bearing on how goods in a society should be distributed. Conceding that people are not and will not be equally endowed, he is sure that our considered judgements demand that we not gain from advantages (remembering that all the advantages we might have are arbitrarily distributed and are not deserved) unless we gain in ways that improve the lot of the worst off in society.<sup>13</sup>

But has Rawls argued effectively against the conventional wisdom here? Is good character and the motivation to develop talents and resources really so randomly distributed? And even if it is, can we easily dismiss the idea that harder working, smarter, or more talented members of the society might deserve more of the primary goods based on their merit? We need not postulate miserable poverty for the less endowed, and fabulous wealth for the talented in order to exceed the radically egalitarian distribution of the difference principle. In fact, refusing to recognize talent in figuring distribution of goods might even work against the functioning of a well

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ordered society. Since classical times, there have been deeply entrenched ideas of what a just distribution should be based on that are in opposition to Rawls; Aristotle observes that "all men agree that what is just in distribution must be according to merit in some sense."<sup>14</sup>

But let us not fall victim to being too dependent on the authority of Aristotle. If, as Rawls would seem to have it, it turned out that we have no moral claim to benefit for our actions or character traits, and that rewarding merit as one of the bases for a scheme of cooperation is unfair, could there be a well-ordered society that organized itself consistently on these tenets? For if we are not morally responsible for our good qualities, what could be said about the bad? For instance, I posit that under Rawls' scheme, it would be impossible to legitimately punish anyone for a crime beyond what would be required for strictly rehabilitative or preventive purposes, since the same moral irrelevance that applied to good character, hard work, or high motivation would act as a double-edged sword and free the wrong-doer from any personal responsibility for his acts; actions and character traits are morally irrelevant. Is this in accordance with our considered judgements? How we answer this is entirely relevant in evaluating Rawls' ideas, but Rawls avoids issues of punitive justice as if we could ignore this in implementing

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the theory.

Related to these issues of implementation and workability is the risk-aversion that Rawls ties to the rationality of the noumenal self.<sup>15</sup> As we have seen, the noumenal self would find it irrational to agree to any arrangement in the original position that would risk him receiving less than some risk-free, guaranteed minimum. Yet would this "maximin" strategy be embraced as just in the phenomenal world as Rawls' theory requires? Or would phenomenal human beings find it perfectly rational to accept a small risk that they might receive a somewhat smaller, yet still acceptable share of the distribution (in order to have a better probability of receiving a larger share than the minimum he could be guaranteed under the no-risk plan)? Assigning rationality an absolute aversion to risk seems a controversial claim, for we often observe gambling in various forms in phenomenal beings, and so long as the odds seemed reasonable and the hoped for gains substantial, we do not find the parties guilty of irrationality.

Having noted some reservations with the theories of both Dewey and Rawls, it remains to make the more important correlative observations that might be found in and between the work of these philosophers. First, it is striking, when viewed in a general way, how each of the theories of human

nature and politics mesh together. This seems to lend support to the intuitive idea that the two areas of inquiry must be closely related. Second, and as one would expect, there are some profound differences between the approaches of Dewey and Rawls. Lastly, and perhaps curiously, when the terminology of each scheme is translated from one to the next (assuming that this is at least partially doable here), some similarities between the two can be drawn.

In Dewey, the attempt to break down what he sees as arbitrary conceptual partitions is largely successful. Extremely plastic and flexible human beings, guided by the habit of intelligence, when they turn their attention to regulating the consequences of their conjoint behavior, in some sense are the state. It is hard to imagine a way of looking at these two areas of inquiry that would unify them more tightly. Not suprisingly then, the characteristics that describe states match up quite closely with characteristics that describe individuals: they are changeable and respond constantly and flexibly to the physical and cultural environment; the force of previously established habits gives (at least some degree of) momentum to existing states of affairs; and the habit of intelligence plays the critical and primary role in making helpful or constructive decisions as to what course of action will be taken, which response is the best, which old

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habits should be modified, and which new ones formed.

Rawls, while nodding toward the undeniably contingent and changeable part of our nature, and making efforts to account for it, appears, at least in the text we are considering, to postulate a deep, true, and unchanging noumenal self. The rationality, moral autonomy and equality of this true self, because it presents a fixed backdrop, leads Rawls to seek timeless, once and for all, and a priori principles that should guide our political conduct. In what might be seen as an influence from the rationalistic tradition, he seems willing to reason from what he feels we can know from introspection and reflection to the phenomenal and changing world of natural and social accident, working from the noumenal side of a dichotomy that at least for any practical purposes, presents an unchanging and transcendent human nature.<sup>16</sup> Once again, as we saw in Dewey, it is not suprising to find close similarities in the corresponding political ideas. The principles of justice are deep, unchanging and regulative of any arrangement or action that might be chosen; actual political institutions may vary from place to place and time to time, in accordance with phenomenal circumstances, so long as they observe the constraints imposed by the permanent normative principles (as if the principles of justice were a 'phenomenal' political arrangement's

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'noumenal self').

When held in juxtaposition, there are some ways in which Rawls and Dewey could not be more diametrically opposed. Rawls is seeking an ahistorical and timeless solution to the problems at hand; Dewey is much more historically oriented, or rather experimental. Rawls expects that there will be significant points of agreement in our considered judgements; Dewey sees some disagreement as unavoidable and indeed, even healthy. Rawls talks of a nature/nurture distinction throughout his work,<sup>17</sup> and believes in a stable and permanent aspect of our nature; Dewey postulates a unified whole that is highly plastic and subject to flux, and embraces a radical holism that resists making any ontological distinction between the organism and its environment--even though functional or descriptive distinctions, carefully made, are permitted, dualism is plainly not.

It is interesting to note that in the face of these apparently radical antimonies, once the theoretical machination is done, both recommend we live in some form of constitutional democracy. When Dewey seeks the democratic virtues, and Rawls outlines the list of primary goods that would be sought in the original position, both seek to find points of agreement between men that will be necessary if we are going to agree on anything at all. Moreover, as we

have observed, despite the avowed stands Dewey and Rawls take on experimentalism and a priori thinking, each philosopher has elements of both to be found in his theories. At the deepest level, both Rawls in his Kantian posture, and Dewey in his commitment to growth, pluralism and democracy, have heavily normative underpinnings to the whole structure of their work; in making their normative assertions, they have not spoken at length to the issue of why we should do anything moral at all, and they share the presupposition that a moral element does and should permeate our thinking and conduct. I would not want to say that these shared features of their theories, and the similarities here noted, constitute any sort of problem to be addressed. I merely find it curious that, in light of their many deep differences, and the diametric opposition between Dewey and Rawls in regards to methodology, that we are able to find any similarities at all. It may be a curiosity worthy of further inquiry.

Given the experimentalism that characterizes Dewey's general approach (the exceptions suggested above notwithstanding) and the rationalistic bent of Rawls (ignoring for the moment his 'experimental' Achilles heel), the similarities noted within each philosopher's work are probably to be expected--the holistic and experimental outlook of Dewey and the rationalism of Rawls would no

doubt influence how they approached any problem, including of course the problems of human nature and the state. Thus, it would make sense that both sets of theories would be marked by the methodological dispositions of their authors: in Dewey tendencies to consider flux and change, try experimental and tentative approaches and see systems as unified wholes, and in Rawls tendencies to see certain dichotomous forms and have confidence in the ability of reason to penetrate a fixed and unchanging nature of things.

But are their general approaches to philosophy the wellspring of the internal similarities we have observed? Or might there be other ways of trying to explain them? The gist of this entire exposition on Dewey and Rawls has been to suggest that theories of human nature and politics in any philosophical system or outlook are possessed of a special and necessarily closely connected relationship that goes deeper than general similarities in approach would otherwise account for. Human beings, as we normally find them, are invariably and inseparably intertwined in societal, cultural and political arrangements. And while there will be differences of opinion as to just exactly what that relationship might be and how we should best describe it (e.g., humans in association are the state, humans merely live under the subjugation of the state,

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humans and states are both expressions of an Absolute Mind, humans make the state by agreement, etc.), a relationship of some sort could be denied only on pain of being inconsistent with what seem to be blatantly true, putative observations about human life.

Can we say anything definitively then about what sort of form this relationship between theories might take? In our study cases of Dewey and Rawls for instance, is the difference between their political ideas rooted in their different conceptions of human nature? Or is it the other way around? And how much does the deeper factor of general approach discussed above contribute to the differences and similarities between the related sets? Actually, it would appear that the relations do not present a lockstep pattern. While temporal priority in the history of their ideas is probably irrelevant, any observed logical priority might be helpful, and in the cases of Dewey and Rawls, the logical priority seems to flow in opposite directions: Dewey's commitment to democratic social and political forms is probably prior to his conception of a plastic and intelligent human nature, and more certainly, Rawls' political ideas come after his ideas about human nature. Perhaps the safest observation we can make is that in both sets of theories, the thinking on human nature seems to constrain to some extent the claims that can be made about

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political organization. Both Dewey and Rawls would be compelled to change their political views if they were somehow proved wrong in their assertions of human nature: Dewey's ideas rest on a plasticity of human habits that may not obtain, and Rawls has made a number of claims about phenomenal human nature that the workability of his theory of justice depends on. Again, drawing hard and fast lines between thinking about human nature and thinking about politics is just what we do not want to do, since they invariably form a tight system of interrelated ideas; but observing the relations and interdependencies that obtain between these conceptual areas within that system will help to focus our evaluation of the ideas being presented, and be of assistance in our trying to chose one over the other as being a better set of theories.

Finally, one might wonder just which set of theories is the better, the weaknesses noted put aside for the moment, since both frameworks do present powerful and for the most part coherent pictures, and seem able to sustain corrections or modifications in response to a number of the criticisms posited here. Generally, it appears that an experimental approach should be preferred over the rationalistic for this reason: an experimental approach, if employed well, might just end up discovering over the long haul that some or all of the assertions made by the

rationalist were true, and in that sense, could accomodate the possibility that the substantive elements of, say Rawls' theory, were right (even if the methodological approach was wrong-headed). The rationalistic project is less flexible in this regard, and on general principle, seems a riskier way to proceed. Regardless, making a definitive statement on this issue would be well beyond the scope and purposes of this thesis, and I shall pursue it no further.

In summarizing the theories of human nature and politics espoused by Dewey and Rawls, and examining the ideas therein for any correlations that might be found, I hope to have raised the possibility that a notion that conceives of theories of human nature and politics as being closely and perhaps necessarily related is a viable hypothesis. Naturally, proving this hypothesis, if it were possible to do so at all, would involve comparatively examining a much, much larger sample of philosophers than the two contrasting test cases selected for this thesis; indeed, the task might constitute a life's work. In concluding the thesis, I would like to gesture toward further inquiry along these lines.

First, more philosophers should be examined, working to the end of providing the just mentioned larger sample. This empirical approach is, I think, a good one: how are

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theories of human nature and political organization actually related in the extant literature? Secondly, some conceptual work would also be appropriate. What sort of logical or formal relations might we tease out of this correlation? The constraining function that theories of human nature appears to have in the two philosophers examined in this thesis might prove to be more generally observable. Perhaps other specific characteristics of the correlation could be discovered. Perhaps moral theories will find a place in this project, as being either tangentially or directly related to the two we have discussed. Regardless of the particular conclusions that we might come to, given the hypothesis posited in this thesis, future evaluations of these closely related theories in any philosophical system might be conducted simultaneously, looking to the coherence that they present or fail to present in this regard as another evaluative criterion.

Any tool that might help in evaluating competing theories of human nature and political organization would be valuable indeed, and should be developed forthwith. After all, no areas of inquiry are quite so immediate and pressing as those which address the domains under the purview of these theories, for they touch and shape every aspect of our experience.

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NOTES

Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup>John Dewey, Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1922; reprint ed., New York: Random House, 1930), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 30-31.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 40-41.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 190.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 190-92.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 69.

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Chapter 2

<sup>1</sup>John Dewey, The Public and Its Problems (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, Swallow Press, 1985), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 39, 47-48, 58-59.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 208.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 209.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 216.

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Chapter 3

<sup>1</sup>John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 12-13.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 18-19.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 20-21.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 251ff.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 255.

<sup>8</sup>John Rawls, "Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical," Philosophy and Public Affairs 14 (Summer 1985): 223ff.

<sup>9</sup>Rawls, A Theory of Justice, p. 252.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 252-252.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 256.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 291-292.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 108-109, 206, 292.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 137-138.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 548.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 281.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 367.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 267, 336.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 267.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 426.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 568.

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- <sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 259.  
<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 415.  
<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 416.  
<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 417.  
<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 426.  
<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 427-428.  
<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 428.  
<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 104.  
<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 301.  
<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 514.  
<sup>54</sup>Ibid., pp. 490-491.  
<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 494.  
<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 177.  
<sup>57</sup>Ibid., pp. 462-463.  
<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 470.  
<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 475.  
<sup>60</sup>Ibid., pp. 486-487.  
<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 487.  
<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 487.  
<sup>63</sup>Ibid., pp. 489-490.  
<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 490.  
<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 437.  
<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 437.
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Chapter 4

<sup>1</sup>John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 434.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 302-303.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 204-205.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 534.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 292.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 103-104.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 100-101.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

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- <sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 102.  
<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 195.  
<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 200.  
<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 196-197.  
<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 198.  
<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 198.  
<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 199.  
<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 198.  
<sup>29</sup>Ibid., pp. 200, 363.  
<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 356.  
<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 365.  
<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 275.  
<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 4-5.  
<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 5.  
<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 454.  
<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 461.  
<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 514-515.  
<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 515.  
<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 275.  
<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 273.  
<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 276.  
<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 276.  
<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 277.  
<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 282.
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## Chapter 5

<sup>1</sup>John Dewey, Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1922; reprint ed., New York: Random House, 1930), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Charles J. Lumsden and Edward O. Wilson, Genes, Minds, and Culture (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 100, 357.

<sup>3</sup>Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th ed., vol. 14, s. v. "Behavior, Innate Factors in Human," by William R. Thompson.

<sup>4</sup>Dewey, Human Nature and Conduct, p. 108.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>6</sup>John Dewey, The Public and Its Problems (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, Swallow Press, 1985), p. 25.

<sup>7</sup>Dewey, Human Nature and Conduct, p. 59.

<sup>8</sup>I have a notion that this is related to the deeper question of whether we should talk about relations between particulars as being particulars themselves, having causal efficacy and ontological status. This difficult question aside, I think we can still look at these seemingly extracted features in a helpful way, whether we give them ontological status or not.

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<sup>9</sup>John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (Cambridge. Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 92.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 20-21, 548.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 511-512.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 301-303.

<sup>14</sup>Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics 5. 3. 1131a25.

<sup>15</sup>Rawls, Theory of Justice, p. 156.

<sup>16</sup>Actually, we might argue for a three part division in Rawls: noumenal, phenomenal but incorrigible--that which the parties in the original position must take into account in considering whether a just scheme can work, and phenomenal but changeable.

<sup>17</sup>And as we have pointed out in the last note, there is a portion of human nature that is prior to even the contingent nature/nurture portion of the self.

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